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MAR 7 1946

THE NEW
STATESMAN
AND NATION
The Week-end Review

Vol. XXXI. No. 782. [Incorporating THE ATHENÆUM] SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1946 [Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper] SIXPENCE

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WHAT DOES STALIN WANT?

So it was an anti-Fascist war from the beginning, after all! This incidental remark in Stalin's speech sets a nice problem in explanation for Communists in France, Germany, Britain and elsewhere, who followed Moscow from 1939–41 in declaring that it was an imperialist war. Only when the U.S.S.R. was invaded, did imperialism change to anti-Fascism. Apart from this, Stalin's speech contained, as far as reported, few revelations. It analysed the causes of the war in its effect on Russia; showed that the present elections are a demonstration, throughout the entire Soviet Union, of loyalty and determination to rebuild; envisaged an improvement in rations; but did not disguise the fact that it will need more than one Five-Year Plan to give the Soviet Union the consistent output she needs. Probably one of the greatest factors in our present difficulties is the failure of the U.S.S.R. to obtain a rehabilitation loan from the U.S.A. On one occasion, we believe, Stalin told his British and American colleagues that, after the war, Russian citizens would need, not another Five-Year Plan, with a new tightening of the belt, but some of the fruits of victory. The Five-Year Plan is here; and self-sufficiency, in the resolute belief that Russia is alone in the world, has been reinforced. Russia still believes that the Western world will attack her if capitalist contradictions and national rivalries do not too much occupy the attention of Britain and America; therefore she stubbornly objects to a settlement of Europe which might again lead to Germany's war machine being rebuilt, as it was after 1919, against the U.S.S.R. A third of the U.S.S.R. has been ravaged by the war, and Soviet civilian and military casualties may amount to nearly 20 millions. The one certainty is that the U.S.S.R. does not want war.

Why then does the U.S.S.R. follow a policy so exasperating to the Western Democracies, and to Britain in particular? On another page we analyse the clash in the Middle East. The explanation would seem to be that, believing that sooner or later Western Capitalism will attack, the U.S.S.R. has begun on a policy of improving her position, especially her oil resources, wherever she believes she can do so without too much risk. Her propaganda and her expansionist efforts are directed against the British Empire because the British are weakened by the war, while America, at the peak of her power and economically useful, must be appeased wherever, as in the Far East, Russian and American zones touch each other. Mr. Bevin, attacking Soviet propaganda before the Security Council as the greatest menace to the peace of the world, seemed to forget that propaganda would have no effect if it was not that throughout a large part of the world, especially among the awakening millions of Asia, Britain, now too late repentant, stands as the old exploiting Power. The East, from inexperience, only dimly apprehends the new danger of American financial imperialism; and the appeal of the Soviet Union is everywhere great because, whatever the defects of Soviet methods, the U.S.S.R. has, in fact, given cultural freedom, educational opportunity, and far greater prosperity to the Asiatic nations Tsardom oppressed.

Stalin said nothing of all this. He spoke truly of the way in which Western diplomacy had vilified and underestimated the U.S.S.R. before its strength was shown in the strain of war. It is easy to understand the logic of Soviet policy—to extend frontiers and build up spheres of influence at the expense of Britain, and to hope that discords and economic confusion in the West will bring world Communism without the necessity of an atomic war whose results are in fact incalculable. But it is a terribly dangerous game to play. It forfeits abroad all the support from progressive opinion that Russia built up during her "anti-Fascist" period. If the new phase leads, as seems likely, to virulent propaganda against all Social Democrats, Russia then, in effect, isolates herself and forfeits foreign support except from obedient members of the Communist Party.

The Indonesian Issue

The Security Council is perfecting a technique whereby dirty linen can be washed in public without rendering the laundry bill to any State member. Mr. Bevin having invoked "the whole honour of the British Government" and the authority of the Anglo-American Chiefs of Staff, the Indonesian issue has lapsed in default of any effective resolution. Let us hope that the local negotiations, in which Mr. van Mook is aided by Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, will be brought to a successful conclusion. The terms offered to the Sjahrir Government are not satisfactory, even to moderate Indonesian nationalists. The promise that "the people of Indonesia should be enabled freely to decide their political destiny" is a step forward. But it does not involve recognition of the Sjahrir Government, and it defers this chance of independence to an unspecified date. For the "transition period" it is proposed that the Dutch Government should draft a constitution in consultation "with authoritative representatives of Indonesia selected from a large variety of people," but it is not clear what groups, outside those backing Mr. Sjahrir, there are who should be consulted. A democratic body is promised "with a substantial Indonesian majority." Whether this is to be elected or nominated is not stated. According to Dutch radio, the Indonesian press is already critical of the failure of the document to mention the key posts of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Above all, Indonesian opinion is likely to object to a Dutch-appointed Governor, apparently with power to override the democratic body on all important issues. The Dutch, advised by the British, will almost certainly have to go farther than this if Mr. Sjahrir is to persuade Indonesian opinion to accept their proposals.

Emigre Armies

The American raid on the Luitpold Camp for Displaced Persons near Munich has revealed the extent of propaganda and organisation by emigres from Yugoslavia and elsewhere against the regimes in their homelands. In the case of Luitpold, a group calling itself the "Royal Yugoslav Army of Bavaria" has been broken up, and the United States' authorities announce that its attempts to organise and arm opponents of Marshal Tito have included an unsuccessful effort to secure American backing. A similar raid was made on a camp at Nuremberg. It is known that these are not the only cases where D.P. camps have been the cover for efforts to rally emigres. These groups ramify throughout the areas under the control of the British and Americans; and Rome—and to a lesser extent Paris and London—has been the focus of their organisation and of their bids to secure the support of the democracies. In every case, when these groups are investigated, links are found with the Polish emigres and particularly with General Anders and his army in Italy. Including the Polish army abroad, these emigre groups command the adherence of numbers of fanatical opponents of the new regimes in Eastern Europe. Can the British and American governments continue to tolerate their disruptive and subversive activities? In particular, how much longer can we afford to provide the financial backing on which General Anders depends? Even if a decision is taken to disarm and to withdraw the financial subsidies to General Anders' troops, what is to become of these men who have no place to go to and who are an element of infection in Europe's political life?

Civil Aviation Agreement

The Bermuda Conference on Civil Aviation appears to have ended in an atmosphere of greater harmony than at one time seemed likely; and the references in the Final Act to distributing the benefits of air travel "for the general good of mankind" are welcome. The United States delegation has, in fact, receded somewhat from the attitude which it adopted at Chicago: the rates to be charged by air services between points in the United Kingdom and points in the United States are to be subject to governmental review. This, at least, is a sensible modification of the "free for all" scramble of unfettered competition. But along the rest of the line the U.S.A. wins everything. It is now agreed that both Britain and the United States shall be free to determine independently the frequency of the operation of national airlines; and, subject to any adjustments found necessary in the light of experience, American airlines have gained the "fifth freedom"; that is, in through-routes between America and either the Continent or the East, they can pick up and set down traffic in Britain. This is a big gain for Pan-American Airways, which they can be relied on to exploit fully. A clause, however, which may prove valuable in practice provides that if any dispute arises between Britain and America in connection with the Agreement, it shall be referred for advice to the provisional International Civil Aviation Organisation. Let us hope that will be the first step towards international collaboration in the air.

Sarawak

After the critical reception accorded to last week's announcement that Sarawak was to become a Crown Colony, the Colonial Office certainly cannot regard the acquisition of this independent State as a *fait accompli*. Although most of the criticism has come from Tory M.P.s and newspapers, it would be a mistake for the Parliamentary Labour Party to see the matter as a party issue or for the Government to secure ratification by making it a question of confidence. For some years past, the Colonial Office has sought to exercise increasing influence in Sarawak, but grants similar to that now promised have been refused in the past because of the political concessions that were demanded in return. The Government may have been satisfied by its negotiations with the Rajah that he was able to cede Sarawak to Britain, but, in fact, by the constitution of 1941, the power to do this rests with the Rajah-in-Council, and the Rajah, by Sarawak law, has himself no power to cede the State. The Colonial Secretary admitted last week that Sarawak opinion about the proposal was sounded by a mission consisting of a representative of the Colonial Office and the Rajah's personal secretary—both interested parties. The Colonial Office has not yet made out a sufficiently strong case for incorporation: it is not enough to say that the need for unifying the laws and administrative methods of Sarawak with those of Malaya is sufficient to justify annexation. The Government should either permit an independent investigation of opinion in Sarawak or should permit the replacement of the British military administration by the normal form of Government in Sarawak, after which a constitutional decision could be made. But this private deal with the Rajah has justly caused some uneasiness.

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NEW STATESMAN AND NATION
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Food: Who Blundered?

No real explanation has yet been given of the extraordinary miscalculation that appears to have been made, not only in this country, but in the world as a whole, about the prospective supplies of wheat. Unexpectedly short harvests explain something; but they cannot possibly account for the whole. The other part of the explanation appears to be that wheat stocks on the American continent have been quite recklessly dissipated in feeding pigs and chickens, and that this misuse has continued right up to the present, despite the increasing danger of world famine. The Argentine, it is said, has consumed its spare wheat because it will not take any more payments in blocked sterling or other unrealisable currencies. North America has done the same because it seemed, for the time being, the most profitable course to take. But surely someone must have known what was happening, and must have been in a position to warn the world's governments, including our own? How did it happen that our farmers were given to understand that they could safely relax their efforts to grow wheat, and turn to an increased output of other kinds of food? Did our Ministers of Food and Agriculture not know what the prospects really were, or did they merely assume that we should be able to buy such wheat as we wanted, and bid the rest of the world go hang?

Eggs versus Films and Tobacco

Films and tobacco are both sources of revenue to the Exchequer, whereas dried eggs are an expense, as they are sold to the consumer at a heavily subsidised price. If this was the real reason for cutting off American eggs rather than American films or tobacco, it was a thoroughly bad reason, however strong an appeal it may have had for the Treasury. The vital issue is that of public need, not that of balancing the Budget under present conditions. It would be a good deal better to let the housewives have more dried eggs, and to charge more for them, than to deprive the consumers of them in order to keep up the supply of more heavily taxed commodities which also involve a large outgoing in dollars. An additional reason is that dried eggs are much less likely than other foodstuffs to be consumed by us at the expense of peoples who are much worse off than we are. There is no shortage of supplies—only of dollars to pay for them. That the latter shortage is extremely acute nobody denies. Even if Congress does in the end ratify the loan, it looks like taking months more to do so; and we have to face the fact that ratification is by no means assured, even after this delay. This being the position, we ought not to buy more eggs without cutting off other purchases, whenever payment has to be made in dollars. This is the more incumbent on us, because the dollar resources we are so rapidly using up cannot rightly be regarded as freely at our disposal. Our sterling creditors surely have some claim on them.

More about Coal

Mr. Shinwell's recent speeches on the coal position have become more and more alarming. Last week-end, he again gave a pledge not to reduce the household ration; but he emphasised the point that industrial recovery cannot possibly be brought about unless the supply of coal can be increased, whereas it is in fact showing a renewed tendency to fall. Re-equipment of the collieries under unified public ownership will, no doubt, bring with it a remedy in the long run. But this is a matter of a number of years; and the country cannot afford to wait. It is, of course, ridiculous to attempt, as the Tories are doing, to make this a point against public ownership; for the basic need is for a long-run improvement in efficiency, so as to make possible a high production of coal with the aid of a relatively small number of miners. The short-run problem, however, cannot be dealt with in this way; and the present need for more mineworkers is imperative. There ought accordingly to be no hesitation about giving the miners any present concession that is calculated both to increase output and to improve the prospects of recruitment. But the overriding difficulty is the general shortage of man-power, which makes it unlikely that any inducements it is possible to offer will produce a sufficient inflow of workers. The only way of meeting this difficulty is by speeding up demobilisation instead of slowing it down, as the Government seemingly intends in the near future.

The Nuffield Threat

Sir Miles Thomas's threat to remove the Morris Works from Oxford unless the City Council makes adequate provision for housing the workers follows on quite a number of rumours in recent years that removal to the Birmingham-Coventry area was being seriously considered. Oxford, as a centre of motor manufacturing, no longer offers the attractions it once did as a source of cheap labour outside Trade Union influence; and apart from these it has evident disadvantages on account of its distance from the places where the engines are made. The Cowley Works has been throughout its career mainly an assembly shop: it has never been used for motor engineering or employed any high proportion of skilled mechanics. The housing difficulty advanced by Sir Miles Thomas is no doubt real; but would it be any smaller elsewhere—unless, indeed, the Nuffield Organisation could transfer to one of the big war factories complete with houses and hostels ready for the workers' occupation? This seems unlikely; and probably Sir Miles Thomas is rather seeking to stir up the local authorities than really meaning to move just now. But the housing situation raises quite difficult problems. The Morris Works lie on the Oxford boundary, and a large proportion of the workers live outside the city. Proper housing for them and for the other factories in the area is a matter not only for the Oxford City Corporation but also for the County Councils of Oxfordshire and Berkshire—or preferably for a new regional body authorised to plan and build for the entire area. The problem is not soluble within the existing local government limitations, any more in Oxford than in dozens of other places where obsolete local boundaries stand in the way of needed industrial and civic development.

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PARLIAMENT: Twenty Years After

Wednesday

Half-past six on Monday during the National Insurance Debate; R. A. Butler on the back-bench, between Sir William Darling and Sir Waldron Smithers, trying to persuade them not to oppose the Bill—for the sake of the side. Darling, whose wing-collar and cravat conceal an I.L.P. past, sits stolidly in his chosen post, a man of substance out of Dickens. Smithers, whose somewhat rebarbative expression gives no hint of his devotion to the organ on Sundays, fights back, clutches Butler's arm when, with a gesture of impatience, he wants to end the conversation, and shouts "No!" to the motion, though not before he has quoted Scripture against Social Security.

Jim Griffiths presented the Bill and elaborated its Clauses with his expected humanity and an impressive skill. Unlike his Parliamentary Secretary, George Lindgren, who had a forgotten letter to the Friendly Societies sprung on him during the Debate, Griffiths had been warned of the detailed criticism of the Bill, through the long-standing campaign of pressure-groups like the Old Age Pensioners' Association, and was ready either to yield or to defend. The Friendly Societies, very appropriately, had the support of members on both sides of the House for their special interest; the self-employed persons, pressing through their Trade Associations, found their champions chiefly among the Tories; the Old Age Pensioners were backed by the Labour benches; and Sydney Silverman, an expert in Committee at spotting the weaknesses of a Bill, put up a solitary but important struggle against the apparent (though not yet certain) retention of the Means Test.

The Lindgren letter—a candidate's pledge which the candidate, become Member and Junior Minister, had to repudiate—has raised again the question of election pledges. Is an election pledge something to be repudiated as of no account merely because it is made in the heat of the election or a Party Conference? And are those who, like the Friendly Societies this week, ask for a pledge to be redeemed, to be treated as importunate nuisances? These are questions which Labour Members must carefully answer, in order that the Government's credit may remain unblemished, and the electorate may not be afflicted with cynicism about "politician's promises."

No one, on the other hand, could complain that the Trades Disputes Bill did not most exactly fulfil the Party promise. George Hicks, a former Trade Union organiser and official, expressed the psychological attitude of the Trade Union Movement to this Bill—an attitude which no lawyer could express. The Trades Disputes Act of 1927 was vindictive, a punitive measure against the defeated of 1926. The workers had then taken an oath not to rest until the Act had been repealed. Their right to withdraw labour was inalienable; and the sympathy which one worker showed for another was one of the noblest manifestations of the human spirit. Hicks's speech was simple and moving, the voice of a victimised generation whose grievances history has revenged.

Hartley Shawcross was a good opener in this debate. His case was convincing, unlegalistic and proved him an effective Parliamentarian, as well as an able lawyer. Significantly enough, Hogg, his putative counterpart on the Tory side, could find little in the substance of Shawcross's argument to argue against, but made some play of the fact that the Attorney-General had been to Nuremberg and wore a red tie in the debate. Hogg is a little master of the minor taunt. What Cripps called Hogg's entertaining turn was really a bantam-weight performance. More than any other speaker, some of whom regarded the Bill as no more than an adjustment of an old wrong, Hogg recognised that it has more than academic importance for the future defence of working-class interests. Eden said that it was "unworthy of the House and unworthy of the men who sponsor it." Whatever that may mean, the Bill tightens the bonds between the Trade Union Movement, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party. It's no laughing matter for the Tories, who regard Bevin's speech as a stab in the back. Yesterday's Palmerston became to-day's trade union boss.

Phineas Minor

THE CLASH IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The collision between Mr. Bevin and Mr. Vyshinsky has dramatised to the world the obvious fact that the Anglo-Soviet alliance has to-day no substantial reality. Mr. Vyshinsky, it is said, stands for world Communism, Mr. Bevin for Social Democracy. Some argue that the two are for ever incompatible, and see no hope of anything but a long series of international crises with a danger of war at the end. Others hope that, as a result of Mr. Bevin's stand, the Russians will realise that Britain under a Labour Government is no longer a decadent imperialism; and since the Soviet Union certainly does not want war, they expect to see a modification of Russian policy and the renewed possibility of agreement. Either course of events is still possible. If Mr. Bevin, on his side, can contain his wrath and remove many legitimate causes of Soviet suspicion, while the Russians, on theirs, decide that their present aggressive policy is too dangerous, the Gadarene rush into the abyss may be checked. The Soviet Union could change its policy overnight, and Mr. Bevin could, though with greater difficulty, do and say the few things that would remove Russia's reasons for assuming permanent British hostility.

The centre of conflict is the Middle East, the region of destiny where East and West have met in uneasy fusion from time immemorial. The present causes of dispute do not arise from the clash of ideology between Social Democracy and Communism; it is a clash of Empires, and the principal factors are oil and imperial communications. Strategically, Soviet pressure differs little from Tsarist, though the social content of its propaganda and the impact of its advance are vastly different. For the British Empire, the Middle East remains a vital strategic area; Mr. Bevin fears that we shall have our throat cut by the Russians in the Dardanelles and Ægean, Adriatic, North Africa, Turkey and Persia.

Col. Lawrence's ideal was that Britain should remain sole mistress of the Middle East, friend and protectress of the Arab world. Although this ideal came to grief in Paris and San Remo, in Syria and Palestine, it continued to exercise powerful fascination over the minds of a number of British officials, who at last got their chance in 1941. The low ebb of British prestige in the Middle East as a result of military reverses early in the war, when the majority of Arabs were openly pro-German, induced Whitehall to return to a positive policy of Arab appeasement. To build up British power and please the Arabs, the first object of British policy was to eliminate the French. The Syrian campaign, fought against Vichy with genuine reluctance and entire good faith, was afterwards exploited in the interests of Syrian "independence" and to the detriment of the French and of the Lebanese Christians. Almost simultaneously, Mr. Eden gave in advance the Government's blessing to any movement of Arab unity having wide support. He was still thinking, no doubt, in terms of a greater Syria.

In pursuit of the same dream of an Arab Middle East, loyal to the British, certain changes were carried out in Egypt. On February 4th, 1942, as British tanks surrounded Abdin Palace in Cairo, Lord Killearn imposed the Wafdist leader Nahas Pasha upon the unhappy King Farouk. Nahas Pasha, not long afterwards, undertook to sponsor the pan-Arab movement himself, while Egypt suddenly discovered affinities with the Arab world. In July, 1944, the Egyptian Premier invited his colleagues from Irak, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Lebanon and the Yemen to come to Egypt to discuss plans for a League of Arab States. These conversations began in September, and the protocol providing for the League was signed on October 7th, the pact itself on March 22nd, 1945. The first act of the League was to take a strong stand against France in the Levant, and its second to initiate a boycott of the Jews in Palestine. On all this the British Embassy in Cairo looked benevolently.

Meanwhile British plans were maturing in Syria. The Levant States were theoretically under a sort of Anglo-Free French condominium, but, inasmuch as the country was occupied by the British Ninth Army, there was a certain inequality of power. Syria was a tempting morsel to offer the Arabs, and the French, though there first, had long been regarded as incompetent intruders by British officials in the Middle East. The tactic for expelling the French was simply to support and to encourage by every means local nationalist sentiment. Syrian and Lebanese independence was brought about with little attention to juridical obligations.

At this period Great Britain acted as though France was the only rival, leaving out of account the growing importance of the U.S.S.R. and the new interest of the United States in this part of the world. The events of November, 1943, in the Lebanon, and the Syrian crisis of May, 1945, had the effect of eliminating France and of leaving Britain's hands free in the Levant. This goal was achieved by what was regarded outside Britain as a somewhat unsavoury intrigue. One result of eliminating the French was that minorities which had relied on France for protection had to look to other Powers.

The United States backed Britain in this anti-French phase of its policy. America needs the British to guard its growing interests in air and other communications, oil concessions and commercial markets. It is not certain, however, that British and American interests will always coincide. The British have made a number of economic concessions to the Americans, and the Americans may not take the view, favoured by British policy in the past, that the immemorial primitive economy of the Arabs is easier to control, and therefore more desirable from the imperial point of view, than a modernised commercial economy such as the Jews built in Palestine and some of the younger Arabs desire for all Arabia. Moreover, the Americans may make a different analysis of the results of British pro-Arab policy.

From the Soviet point of view, the only conclusion that can be drawn from British policy is that it is an effort to organise the Middle East against the U.S.S.R. They have plenty of material to justify this view, just as the British can cite much Soviet propaganda and intrigue to prove that Russian policy is to destroy the British Empire. The present anti-Turkish propaganda in the Soviet press replies to a more virulent anti-Soviet propaganda in an influential section of the Turkish press. The important paper *Tannan* attacks Russia most violently in terms which are directly reminiscent of Goebbels. The demonstrations last December, which resulted in the sacking of four newspapers in Istanbul while the police stood by and watched, were clearly intended to warn Turkish editors that they must not, even in the most moderate terms, advocate friendship with the Soviet Union. Moreover, the British manœuvres for bringing together the various Arab potentates can only be interpreted as an effort to stabilise the most conservative and anti-Soviet forces throughout the Arab world against the Soviet Union. Russia, on her side, has already found it easy to win the favour of minority groups. If her object is a subservient Persia and a docile Turkey, it is convenient that the Armenians already wish to return to Russian allegiance, that the Kurds, whose territory includes so much valuable oil, readily respond to Russian promises to fulfil their national aspirations; that the Orthodox Greeks, and even the Maronite Catholics, both deprived of French protection, are beginning to look more favourably on the Soviet Union.

Against this background the Syrian and Lebanese demand for the withdrawal of British and French troops is part of the British-Soviet clash in the Middle East. In deciding to found their future on a presumably anti-Soviet Arab bloc, British policy appears to us to be founded on sand. The Arab League is of no military account; its economic resources are small; it is beset by internal rivalries; and there is not the slightest reason to believe that it will remain "loyal" to the British Empire. It is quite useless at one moment to strengthen the Hashimites with Transjordanian "independence," and Ibn Saud at the next with an Egyptian alliance. It is immaterial whether or not the Persian Gulf Sheikhdoms join the Arab League: whether the Saadabad Pact lives or dies. Whatever happens, the Arabs will be nationalists and xenophobes, and they will know how to extort concessions from the British. They will try to balance their position between the two great external forces. Their policy will be determined not by love for us or hatred of the Russians, but by a calculation of the rival forces which coax and threaten them.

In our present bid for Arab support we British can only go a certain distance before we cut our own throats. Anglo-American commitments of all kinds are such that we cannot offer the moon. The Russians can always go one better; the Russian appeal will not always or mainly be to Arab princes and landowners; its real strength in the long run is that it offers the miserably poor Arab peasants the hope of a modernised economy and the end of landlord exploitation. The independence which General Spears won for Syria and Lebanon is a double-edged weapon, and in the long run it means the independence of the mass of the population, which is likely slowly, very slowly, to turn against the West. Already the independence of Azerbaijan has brought the Soviet camp to within 150 kilometres of the Kirkuk oilfields. Kirkuk itself, and Mosul, too, lie in the heart of Kurdistan, a martyr country desperate for independence. But Kurdish independence would mean the end of Irak. If the rising tide of pan-Arabism, set in motion by ourselves, but now also fostered from Moscow, submerges the Jewish establishment in Palestine and the Christian Lebanon, the only friends whose loyalty has never wavered will have been sacrificed to the romantic chimera of a great Arab union, resuscitating the glories of the Caliphate, linked to Britain by bonds of gratitude and amity.

This has never been an intelligent dream, and it does not take account of present reality. It would surely have been wiser for both the British and the Russians to maintain the original policy of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, which was, verbally at least, to accept the facts of each other's power, co-operate on the basis of respect for each other's interests, and work together to improve the living standards of backward peoples.

AFTER THE WAR IN MANCHESTER

Something seems to have happened to Manchester. It was hard for me (re-visiting the city which I quitted ten years ago, the war intervening) to say just what it was; it wasn't easy for the Manchester people themselves. They all said different, but compatible things. A social worker thought that there was "a more widespread and active consciousness of social needs." A trade union official said that he noticed more energy, more vitality in people. A business man said, "More kindliness, less hardness and rivalry and jealousy." Another said, "Less smug self-satisfaction; they're out of the 19th century now." It is as if a south-west wind, warm, rainy, fertilising, has blown up during the war years over the arid pavements of the city.

One sees, on such a visit, only the surface of things. But here are a few features I saw, breaking the expected surface.

The City Plan was the first surprise. Nearly three years ago, the City Surveyor was told to prepare proposals for the post-war planning of Manchester. The result was an ambitious piece of work, notable not only for the evident care and skill with which its statistical foundations were laid, but also for the dignity and even grandeur of its conceptions, the high standard it set the city, the sense of beauty and of community which informs it. I read it rather incredulously, with an "All right, but they'll never stand for this" attitude. I found myself behind the times. It was taken seriously—not indeed, taken for granted, but admired and upheld in principle—by hard-boiled politicians and journalists who, ten years ago, would have dismissed it, without condemnation indeed, but with a shrug of the shoulders. "Perhaps not entirely this," they said in effect, "but it will have to be something like this." From the general public, I am told, it called forth a response bordering on enthusiasm; tens of thousands went to the City Art Gallery to inspect its tables, plans and perspectives there exhibited.

The community centre movement, now officially "taken up" by the Ministry of Education, began before the war; already there were several such centres in Manchester (Wilbraham Estate, Benchill, Burnage) serving as focus for the common business and recreation of the neighbourhood. The war has held back their development, by denying them buildings in which to expand; but it has at the same time filled the sails of the movement already launched, and greatly increased the number of possible centres. It happened this way. In many industrial districts in or near the city (Chorlton, Eccles, Urmston, Middleton, Newton Heath, Old Trafford) War Workers' Clubs were founded with the support of the Ministry of Labour, primarily for transferred workers, women and girls, brought from distant parts of the country to local factories on war work, living in cramped billets, and lacking amenities and friends. Many local people also joined them, wishing to make the visitors feel at home. Now the transferred workers are gone. But the clubs have been found so welcome that most of them have survived as Citizens' Clubs, and seem likely, with a little help from the city, to develop into the sort of community centre which the Ministry of Education wants to see.

I spent some time in the Newton Heath club; it is a modest friendly place, a converted corner shop, with a sitting-room and canteen and games room on the ground floor, a reading-room and warden's office above, and a table tennis room in the basement. It has at present rather over a hundred members, nearly all young people at work. (The bigger clubs here have about 400.) It has no formal agenda. There is a weekly discussion group. There is a drama group, whom I found rehearsing their first venture, Denis Johnstone's *The Lovely Miracle;* the producer was having hard work to get voices and hands unself-conscious and expressive, but it was beginning to come. Parties are made up to go walking in the Peak at week-ends (stopping sometimes at the youth hostels) or to the theatre in central Manchester. Girls in exiguous lodgings can wash their hair or their clothes at the club. Some clubs run a band, a first-aid class, handicrafts, "make-do-and-mend" sessions, P.T. classes, football teams. But they are all primarily places of social recreation, where young people of small resources and interests as yet hardly specialised can come together to exercise their minds and bodies and learn the elements of living in a community.

The Day Nurseries are another pre-war vessel whose sails have been filled by the war winds. Before the war, there were only three of these in Manchester; the best known, in Hulme, had been running for years on voluntary contributions, the others supported by the Council. The demand for women workers in war factories called into being over thirty nurseries where employed mothers could leave children, too young for school, while they did a day's work. Most of them take twenty-five to thirty children each. They have been found so welcome that there is a strong demand for keeping them on; all have long waiting lists, one has two hundred mothers wanting to use it. Experience has converted many sceptics. As a leading member of the Women's Co-op. Guild put it, "Before, many of our own members were against them. They said it made lazy mothers. But now we recognise that there are a lot of mothers who have *got* to go to work, and these nurseries are the best they can do for their children." There were, she said, three classes of mothers who had often to go out and earn a living as a direct result of the war: widows, women whose marriages had broken down in the war and whose men had left them, and the distressingly big number who had never been married at all. To all these, the day nurseries are a godsend.

It is found a bit harder now to recruit voluntary workers for such jobs as the Citizens' Advice Bureaux than it was in the war. But more young men and women than ever before are preparing themselves for full-time social work. A class in social administration was begun at the university in 1939, as part of the B.A. (Admin.) course; it started with sixteen students. The current course has one hundred, and about fifty have already put their names down for the session beginning next October. Most become almoners, club-leaders, housing managers and the like.

I have not mentioned the economic changes now going on in Manchester, because these seem to be almost entirely a continuation of long-term trends, and the war has contributed little to them, except to absorb all and more than all the surplus labour in the cotton industry. But that is Oldham's and Blackburn's problem more than Manchester's. But here is a new venture on the industrial flank which sprang out of the war, and looks like lasting—the Claremont rehabilitation centre for dock workers.

The average age of the labour force at Manchester docks rose markedly during the war, and so did the number of men absent from work on account of chronic maladies (mostly rheumatic) and slow recovery from accidents; as one might expect among older men. A centre for treatment was therefore set up at Claremont, a big house in West Salford, and men who have been off work for these reasons, and are thought likely to benefit are (with their consent) sent for diathermy and radiant heat treatment, for remedial exercises appropriate to various types of injury (arm, finger, foot, ankle, ribs), and for general physical development in a gymnasium run by an Army P.T. Corps instructor. Claremont takes about forty men at a time; they attend five full days a week, and get 66*s*. a week allowance while there; they may attend anything from one week to more than twelve, but six is an average. Now Merseyside dockers, too, are coming; they stay at the house through the week, and go home for the week-end. The results have been very promising. Of 483 men who have been through to date, only twenty-three have been referred to the Ministry of Labour for re-training, as no longer able to work on the docks. The duration of time-off-work has been cut—absence is down from 25 to 12 per cent. (but this is not the only factor in that). Few men have needed a return visit. The Centre has helped, too, to "de-casualise" the job. The labour turnover at the docks is usually very high. But of the men treated at the centre and passed fit to work, only seven have left the docks since. Each day's activities at the Centre end with a lecture or discussion group, or sometimes an M. of I. film. This seems to be liked by most of the men, especially when the subject bears on their own work.

This readiness to talk about serious topics, from economic history to "What is art?" pops up in some odd places. I was lunching with an alderman in one of those bar-cum-restaurants where you don't hear much talk, except about spinners' margins and the odds for the big race, and he was hailed by some people I didn't know. "They're in my Pub Group," he said. "A year or so ago, some chaps in the bar here said they were going to form a discussion group, and would I be chairman? I said I would, on one condition; no treating, and no one to drink if he didn't want to. I did their first talk (on population statistics) and they've been meeting weekly ever since, on the top floor here; about twenty-five of them."

London's war-time appreciation of music is well-known. Manchester has the same story. Before the war, the Hallé Orchestra played in the Free Trade Hall once a week, and occasionally on a Monday night, too; half way through the war, with the Free Trade Hall burned out, it seemed almost moribund. Now it is prospering as not for years; two concerts a week, plus an afternoon concert on frequent Sundays; full houses, with a much bigger share of younger listeners; growing interest in recent and contemporary work; in a window of the Hallé Society's offices is a notice, "Prospectus entirely sold out!" Chamber music is, however, less well attended.

The theatre has been cramped for elbow room; the Repertory faded out just before the war, and the Prince's Theatre was pulled down about the same time. The big amateur societies have all survived and are coming back into their strength. A branch of the Unity Theatre has sprung up, and charmed Christmas playgoers with "The Knight of the Burning Pestle." Summer Shakespeare in the parks came in with the "holidays at home" campaign, and a plan to make this season a recurrent one is now under discussion. A Manchester Ballet Club has begun to produce and perform its own ballets in a studio near All Saints'. There are about one hundred and fifty members, four of whom have joined professional ballet companies. The club also organises recitals of music and shows of painting by local artists.

Such are the points which strike the returning native; trivial enough, perhaps, in themselves (except the City Plan), but then so are the buds in a hedgerow, if you see them early on.

PATRICK MONKHOUSE

A LONDON DIARY

THE question of Foreign Office appointments will not rest where it was left last week by Mr. McNeil's answer to Mr. Warbey. His suggestion that Foreign Office appointments should go to people of Labour views because of their Labour views was a bad blunder which has confused an issue of growing importance. It has, indeed, so confused it that the *Observer* in a surprisingly misinformed note last week spoke of this journal as supporting the notion that "non-Socialists cannot be trusted to carry out the policy of a Socialist Minister, because they belong to a different world," and said that this was to demand the Tammany "spoils" system so that "Left Wing partisans can have the plums." Our article argued the very different thesis—that temporary civil servants who proved necessary in wartime and who had, as a result of this experience, a far wider understanding of the social and economic situation in many foreign countries, were more than ever required for overseas work now. Nor was the *Observer* right in thinking that the appointment of Sir Alexander Cadogan to UNO was our chief worry. Our main point, which we could illustrate with scores of examples, was the disastrous effect of pre-war diplomats in post-war Europe.

* * *

Since the Russians as well as the Americans and British and other members of UNO, voted for Mr. Trygve Lie as Secretary-General, I was not surprised to see in at least one paper a suggestion that he must be in some way or other a tool of Soviet policy. In fact, from my own knowledge of Mr. Trygve Lie and from what I read of his published views, I should say that he is a good Social Democrat. Of course he knows, like other European Socialists, that they must make terms with Communism. But that does not mean he is any less a Social Democrat than Mr. Bevin. I have just read an interesting extract from an article by Mr. Lie in *The Times* of November, 1941, quoted in an excellent book called *Look to Norway* (Secker and Warburg, 12*s.* 6*d.*), written by Mr. Warbey, the M.P. who phrased his question on Foreign Office appointments so badly last week. Mr. Lie's views are clearly stated. The old Liberal system of economics, he says, is gone; there must be co-operation between the nations to give the whole European continent the consumers' goods it needs, and the means of production to start the wheels again. Mr. Warbey understands Norway well. He worked with the Norwegian Government in this country during the war, and I met him in Oslo on a visit last September. His book is a serious and comprehensive study of the country, of its resistance movement and its political and economic prospects. We need just such a new and up-to-date book about each of the occupied countries. Unfortunately few of them are as easy to write about with confidence and clarity as Norway.

* * *

Question time in the House of Commons is one of the few British institutions that impress American visitors. Senator Vandenburg, for instance, was listening with absorbed attention from the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery the other day. An experienced American reporter remarked to him, "Do you notice how tough these young M.P.s are at question time? They know their stuff and the Ministers have to be on their toes." Oddly enough, the British public does not always realise what it owes to the accident that makes members of the Government also Members of the House, where they are constantly called to give an account of their stewardship. The replies which Civil Servants draft have to be detailed; if they were perfunctory, the Ministers would be unarmed against "supplementaries." This is one of the most effective means of controlling the Executive that we have. I hear that there is an influential group in the United States which wants to establish the same institution in the American Congress. It would remedy one of the worst defects in the American Constitution, which too sharply separates the Executive from the Legislature. I do not think anyone proposes a Constitutional amendment requiring the President to choose his Cabinet from Members of Congress, but no such amendment would be necessary to enable members of the Administration to appear before Congress so many times a week to answer questions in the House of Commons manner.

* * *

Attacks come from all sorts of unexpected quarters. Here is the *Jewish Chronicle*, often an able and sensible paper, vehemently attacking me for saying that since all the Jews in Europe cannot now go to Palestine, we need to know how many want to, whether they prefer to go to America, and whether some may not realise that they perform their greatest service to mankind when they allow themselves to act as a leaven within other cultures. This, it is suggested, is another heartless proposal to make the Jews "move on" again—as they have been doing for 2,000 years. Why it should be assumed that a Jewish State in an Arab world would be stable and permanent I can't imagine. Surely, the problem is how to make a Palestinian State in which a much larger number of Jews than at present live there can dwell at peace with the Arab population. Again, I have a long and moving letter from Palestine about an incident in Tel-Aviv last November. A riot began and, according to my informant, the rioters, "emboldened by the passivity of the soldiers," started to throw stones. The soldiers fired, killing six people, including two children. Some of the details sound bad, and the soldiers are also accused of looting—which, in view of the record of all armies since the end of the war (including the British) is not unlikely. A newspaper *Davar* was suspended for a week for printing a caricature showing two doctors cracking jokes in hospital about the soldiers' success in sniping children. I am not surprised at this act of censorship. But censorship of newspapers is bad and the shooting of unarmed crowds horrible. Both are probably inevitable as long as troops remain in a country against the wishes of the population. But do the Zionists want the British troops withdrawn?

If I were asked to make a list of the dozen most remarkable men I have known intimately, I should include Jack Driberg, whose death came as a sudden blow last week. There can have been few, if any, cases of an Englishman "going native" so thoroughly while still remaining a Western European. He could talk a large number of both Arabic and African dialects. He became a Moslem himself; he could dress and live as an Arab without the Arabs guessing that he was not one of themselves, and he was a blood brother of at least one remote African tribe. When a District Officer on the Sudan frontier, he fought duels with spears against native champions, and was finally thrown out of the Colonial Office for inventing—and preventing—a war. The story, in outline, is that he was ordered to lead a punitive expedition against a hill tribe who had been raiding British-protected country. He refused, explaining that he knew the natives and understood the reason for the raid, and that he could settle the matter amicably. After a heated correspondence with H.Q. at Khartoum, he was given peremptory instructions to carry out the expedition. He let a few weeks go by and then wrote a report that he had done as he was told; so many people killed, so many huts burned, and so forth. Unfortunately some British officers who had wanted to take part in this raid made inquiries, and Driberg was sacked. Efforts were made to reinstate him, but though there were important officials who shared his point of view, they could not overcome the fact of his insubordination. He had long outraged British Colonial opinion in East Africa. Indeed, he became a kind of legend. At one time he was followed by as many as five lions, and had a curious menagerie about which he wrote a number of entertaining articles. The articles about the life of his favourite lion, Engato, afterwards appeared in book form in 1933. At one time he was a frequent contributor to this journal. As a lecturer in anthropology at the London School of Economics and later at Cambridge, I never felt he was wholly happy. He had, of course, an unusual approach to the subject because he knew the Lango, and "the people with the small arrow" and the other tribes he wrote about, not from the outside investigator's point of view, but as a friend and tribal member. Often in talking with him I felt that, simply and without posing, he preferred Abyssinians to English people. I knew he was bound to return to a life of adventure some time. The war gave him his chance in the Middle East. He came home badly knocked about, and was working at the Ministry of Information up to the time of his death. I believe he made a contract to write his autobiography, but I don't think he even began it. It would have been a terrific book.

* * *

Someone on the Commission which went over to inquire for a UNO site in the United States must have had a sense of humour. As a permanent site they chose an area in Westchester County, which is, I suppose, the most expensive bit of real estate in the entire world. I imagine they liked the magnificent parks and rolling wooded country where the millionaires live. Did they expect, I wonder, the millionaires to rise up and accuse them of cruelly proposing to throw them out of their little homes? In any case, they anticipated a considerable time-lag and suggested as an interim area a site outside New York where they would have no place for the Assembly, which Mr. Rockefeller kindly offered to accommodate in the vast Radio Centre of Rockefeller Plaza. He would not charge them any rent; it would merely cost them the not inconsiderable sum necessary for paying the idle orchestra and artists. If you really want to make a farce of the Assembly, that's the place to put it, though whether anybody would get any pleasure out of the farce except the ballyhoo journalists and gossip writers I could not guess.

* * *

Even the Beavercamomere Press now in search of weapons against the Labour Government can find nothing to complain of in the reduction of

Labour's Standing Orders from ten to three, and the new freedom given to Labour M.P.'s to speak and vote against the Government when they feel they must. The issue was put to them as an appeal to loyalty instead of discipline. This is a real step forward. The Party has learnt a lesson from the expulsions of Sir Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan and G. R. Strauss, all of whom are now in the Government.

* * *

A reader who suggests, very sensibly, that this journal ought to have a This America column, sends as an example the following quotation from *Time* magazine of Dec. 31st:

Revised Version

Across the first page of the Christmas issue of the Catholic Universe Bulletin, Cleveland's official Catholic diocesan newspaper, ran this eight-column banner head:

"It's a boy in Bethlehem."

"Congratulations God—congratulations Mary—congratulations Joseph."

Critic

LULLABY OF A COMMON BABY

(After Sir Walter Scott)

O sleep, common baby, as long as you can,
You must soon play your part in the national plan;
While you howl in your cradle commitments accrue
Which all must be met, common baby, by you.

A charge on the State during national youth,
While all your relations grow long in the tooth,
You must live to earn pensions and funeral grants
For numberless national uncles and aunts.

In vital statistics you take the first place,
Potential support of a vanishing race,
You will wake, common baby, to labour and sweat
To wipe off accretions of national debt.

Your maximum earnings are taxed in advance
To honour the pledges of wartime finance;
Refunded tax-credits, repaid E.P.T.,
They all are depending, peaked baby, on thee.

Then sleep, common baby, as long as you may,
For claims come with waking and budgets with day,
To pay for wars ended before you began,
So sleep, common baby, as long as you can.

Sagittarius

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to L. A. Richardson.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Surely you underestimate the spirit of Southern England by being so willing to wager that there were no ladies sleeping in the nude during the flying bomb period.—Letter in *Sun Bathing Review.*

Conservatives are quite prepared to admit, as they must, that there is a world food situation.—*Daily Mail.*

Some hats follow what the designer engagingly calls the "diplomatic line." The brims come down almost to the tip of the nose in front, so that "instead of looking straight in front of you, you must always look sideways."—*News Chronicle.*

"He's a master of Black Magic," she testified. "He chanted to me, and gave me soothing manipulations."

Then she found she was going to have a baby.—*Sunday Pictorial.*

A person wanted for queueing once a fortnight. 6.30 a.m.–9.30 a.m. 1/6 per hour. Fare to London paid.—Advt. in *Woking Herald.*

The Conservative Party, said Mr. Law, had never been opposed to the trade union movement, and in the whole history of the movement it had been the Conservative Party that had stood up for it when other parties were willing to let it be submerged.—Report in *Western Mail.*

JUNGLE RAILWAY

[*The following article is written by a British Officer who was for three years a prisoner of the Japanese in Thailand.*]

Towards the end of May the monsoon breaks over central and northern Thailand. For four and a half months the rain descends almost without ceasing, and the grey-green leaves of the endless jungle are glistening with perpetual moisture. Jungle paths, winding through the forest and between the vast thickets of prickly bamboo, are turned into rivulets; the rain collects on the giant leaves of the teak trees, and falls with fat, audible thuds on to the sodden ground below. Roads, where they exist, rapidly become quagmires impassable even to bullock-carts; and rivers, in the dry months clear and fast-flowing streams racing over frequent rapids, change into brown, swirling currents, often flooding, bringing down whole trees on their foaming surfaces, or sometimes even wooden Thai houses and bodies of drowned villagers. Each morning a grey-white mist rises out of the forest, and the only noises that break the silence are the plaintive, whistling cries of the gibbon apes in the distant tree-tops, and the faint whirring hum of the wings of myriad mosquitoes.

By the end of May, 1943, the engineers of the Imperial Japanese Army had completed over 120 kilometres of the railway that was to link Bangkok to Moulmein, and their vast Labour Force of European and Asiatic coolies was working from a series of jungle camps stretching from Bampong in the South, northwards through the monsoon jungle till it reached the Three Pagoda Pass on the Burma Border, and on for another 150 kilometres to Tambuzayat, some 50 miles south of Moulmein. From these camps daily working-parties went out to build the bridges, dig out the cuttings, put up the endless embankment—all by hand labour. And daily men died in those camps of exhaustion, of dysentery, of malaria, of beri-beri, and of cholera.

Life was almost unbelievably primitive; not only, though, because the conditions were so primeval, but because men were reduced to the old basic struggle for existence; personal survival was the only consistent conscious or subconscious aim of each man, and as the circumstances grew harder and worse, so general morals and values degenerated.

The prisoners existed at best in leaky old tents through which the monsoon blew and seeped, and at worst, in dirty styes they had made for themselves out of bamboo poles, split-bamboo slats, and thatch of grass or banana leaves. Everyone was perpetually wet; everywhere was glutinous, thick mud. Clothes were almost exhausted, and some went out to work in filthy old hats, the briefest of loincloths, and ancient, broken boots, while others had to go out bare-footed. Faces were thin and bearded, bellies swollen, and most bodies covered with some form of ring-worm, scabies or dermatitis. To "go sick" meant the necessity of showing an open wound to a Japanese Medical Orderly, so that dysentery seldom counted as an illness until it was too late; malaria, too, was only recognised as a fever at the rigor or "peak" temperature stages. The only hospital accommodation, even during the cholera epidemic, consisted of rotten, overcrowded tents, and there the M.O.s had to try to effect cures with practically no drugs, no equipment, and no powers to rest up the sick men.

For food there was rice. The diet was at least 95 per cent. broken, polished rice, deprived of the vital "B" vitamin. Sometimes the meagre rations of vegetables and meat arrived; and sometimes, for weeks, they didn't. Occasionally there was an issue of dried fish, "stink fish" as it was called, which was largely uneatable; the dried vegetables, when issued, were invariably inedible and simply thrown into the river. Inevitably, every man was hungry, and everybody was constantly on the verge of beri-beri and pellagra. After the month of June the Japanese ordered: No more Yasmes! (Rest days.)

And this was when the work was at its hardest. The only tools were picks, shovels, changkuls, saws and axes; and the pile-driver was a crude, home-made edifice of bamboo framework, and the iron weight was worked on a pulley hauled by the raw hands of scores of men. There were over 400 kilometres of railway to be built through virgin jungle, and every embankment, every cutting and every bridge was completed by hand-power. The bridge at Wan Po, over a quarter of a mile long, was built based on a precipitous limestone ridge that overhung the river on a wide curve—and it was finished in 17 days! As the grand "Speedo" accelerated, the men were on parade in the morning in the dark, and in the dark they came back to their saturated tents in the evening.

Quite fantastic though these conditions were, those of the unfortunate Asiatics were generally far worse. Their work was the same, or lighter at times, but their accommodation was just the jungle or 50 to a two-man tent; their food was less, and their drugs and hospital arrangements practically did not exist. Though European casualties were horribly high, the Asiatic casualties were far higher. And the Asiatics were of every Eastern race—Burmese, Javanese, Tamils, Chinese and Malays. Their life-pattern under the Japanese was the same as that of the Europeans who worked alongside them. Perhaps never before have Europeans been on such a footing of equality with the humblest Asiatics.

This new relationship worked in various ways. Sometimes Malayan Civil Servants or planters visited and gave up part of their own small rations to help save the lives of Tamils or Malays deserted and left to die by the Japanese; and the life work of many doctors was to battle with the Japanese for drugs for their Asiatic patients. On the other hand, Tamil and Malay foremen of coolie-gangs tried their best to help the English by cashing cheques, for they were paid at a higher rate; and there was a Tamil cook who followed his former employer about from camp to camp and tried to send him in money secretly.

Just as the Tamils were collected from idle rubber estates in Malaya, enticed northwards by the most outrageous lies, so were the tens of thousands recruited in Burma. The guide on one of the most heroic attempts at escape through Burma was a Burmese cook who not only volunteered to lead the party, but who produced 500 dollars on his own account to help finance the seven or eight British who went with him.

Probably the most tragic people on the railway were the Javanese. The Japs well knew that the most cunning promises would not beguile the Javanese in sufficient numbers into risking leaving their beloved Java, and so they had been blatantly shanghaied. All able-bodied Javanese attending certain free, Jap-sponsored cinemas, found themselves seized at the doors on leaving the buildings, and were carried out to transport ships on which, without their families ever knowing what happened to them, they were taken to Thailand and Burma to fill the gaps in the ranks of the coolies who were already working there. Similarly, certain young Javanese women who answered advertisements in the Jap-controlled newspapers for work as "skilled needle-women," were borne away to stock the brothels of the I.J.A. throughout the Orient.

All races and creeds on the railway were twice united—by the sameness of their present fate, and by their detestation of the brutal and arrogant nation that was apparently intent on driving them to death.

But it was not only the actual workers who were united against the Japanese. The Thai *people*, to a man, were solidly anti-Jap. In many ways they tried to help the lot of the prisoners, not only by the mutually beneficial transactions of "flogging" kit or valuables, but in ways that led them often to danger, and some of them almost daily risked torture and death. When caught bringing unofficial food or fruit in their canoes to the camps, they were stood in front of the Japanese Guard Room for days, and severely beaten up; and there was one almost legendary Thai who lived in Kanchanaburi, and brought up canteen supplies 200 kilometres by river right through the worst days, and who cashed cheques, advanced money against precious personal valuables which he held for over two years and then actually redeemed when the war was over, and who brought in up-to-date radio news and newspapers. The river was the life-line of the camps, and the Thais kept it open.

* * *

On August 16th, 1945, when the news of the end of the war was officially told us, I was in Kanchanaburi Camp. Between our camp and the town of Kanchanaburi, dominated by its great Paper Factory chimney, was a broad field, or padang, where nightly football matches took place, contentedly watched by hundreds of British, Australians, Dutch, Thais, Javanese, Malays and Indians. Inside the Japanese sector of our old camp the Jap and Korean soldiers were confined to their huts.

All these peoples had just one thought: "The war is finished: let us get home as soon as possible." But unhappily, and for various reasons, the most diverse fates awaited those liberated peoples. The British and Australians went homewards miraculously quickly; the Malays and Indians followed suit, gradually; the Dutch are partly in Thailand, still waiting, and partly training and re-equipping to go and reconquer a politically alive and awakened Java; the Javanese, still isolated in Thailand, find themselves oddly dependent on the Dutch Civil Servants on the spot—Civil Servants whose Government is at war with their own Indonesian Independence Party; and the Thai people, so uniformly pro-Ally, have been treated as enemies and are paying heavily for the Quisling Government that never represented them, but which always had the armed force of Japan behind it.

The Koreans, on the other hand, most loyal and frightful of Japan's instruments, have been promised complete independence after a joint-Allied suzerainty of only five years!

NEW PICTURES

In the agreeably unregimented realm of English painting two youngish schools have now become conspicuous. It would be easy to label one of them "reactionary" because it starts from nineteenth-century tradition, paying homage to Courbet, Whistler and Degas; and to label the other "progressive" because it begins by accepting the innovations in conception and technique imposed upon the twentieth century by the Ecole de Paris. But I do not care for these labels which carry implications, according to the prejudices of the reader, either of blame or of praise. Moreover, a Marxian critic would be hard put to it to detect among the respective adherents of the two schools any corresponding contrast in political opinions, social background or economic status. It may more convincingly be argued that the "reactionary" painters choose to live in an ivory tower, whereas the "progressives" are impelled to express the anguish of our time. For my part I find both these preferences perfectly reasonable, and I think that artists are right to choose the course temperamentally congenial to them. If, therefore, I find myself more interested in one of these schools than the other, it is not upon any principle or theory, but because of the actual works. I would add the warning that the more "topical" artists are less easily approachable than those in the ivory tower.

The Lefevre Gallery is showing the work of eight painters, six of whom may be roughly grouped in the same school. (The two others, Ben Nicholson and Julian Trevelyan, though they also use contemporary idioms, have different purposes, the former indeed appearing almost dandified in his exquisite detachment, the latter achieving an ornamental and deliquescent charm.) Graham Sutherland has already something of the position of a *chef d'école*, and since his two new pictures have thorn-trees as their motive, I shall not be surprised if we soon find thorns burgeoning fashionably on hundreds of canvases by other artists. But I have no reason to think that Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBride have been influenced by Mr. Sutherland. Both of these are most accomplished craftsmen: Mr. Colquhoun, in particular, is developing, and *Women with the Birdcage* is the best picture I have yet seen by him. Both use the same very limited palate, which I wish they could extend. If I feel less enthusiastic than perhaps I should for such carefully contrived pictures, it is chiefly because the imaginative world they project is to me so little inviting. Let me own up: peasants, except in Russian novels, usually fill me with dismay; and it is probably owing to this deficiency in me that I find these kailyard gammers more glum than tragic or moving.

Mr. Craxton has escaped from his obsession with blue and from his trees with human faces. I only hope that he won't go on giving us men with feet four times bigger than their heads, a depressing convention that has already been exploited by Tchilietchef, whom I suspect of catching it from Picasso. Mr. Craxton's new pictures are far the best he has exhibited, and suggest a decorative talent not unlike Miro's. Lucian Freud's portraits are everything I most deplore, but the picture of a dead heron reveals that he has remarkable painter-like qualities. Faced with disconcerting pictures the critic now has to vary Kipling's line and enquire, "It's ugly, but is it art?" The way the feathers are painted inclines me to answer "Yes."

I do not know how far Graham Sutherland's thorns are deliberately symbolical.

> Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

Certainly these jagged forms are the flora appropriate to a crucified world in which atrocity has become endemic. The larger of these two pictures must be counted among the most powerful works this extraordinary artist has achieved. I could hardly tear my eyes away from it.

Lastly Francis Bacon. The two large pictures by him, one of which has been very properly bought by the Contemporary Art Society, make clear what I dimly surmised from the four other pictures that I have seen by him. There is nobody in England who can paint better, and only two or three who can paint anything like as well. Look at the grey material and the blue flowers, the handling is consummate. I should suggest an affinity with Velasquez's, if I did not know that somebody would at once attribute to me the view that Mr. Bacon is as great a painter as the Spaniard. I don't cotton on to his symbolism, and—far more serious—I find his compositions hard to grasp. But what excitement to find in a young English painter such staggering virtuosity.

At the Adams Gallery, which has reopened on the second floor above Coolings at the top of New Bond Street one can always expect to enjoy oneself. Adrian Daintrey's pictures reveal a delightful understanding of the Italian scene expressed in bold and fluent paint. (He is less happy in France, and his view of the Seine is like no Seine I ever saw—it even has prickly pears in the foreground!) The larger pictures tend to a certain tenuity and would make admirable backcloths for a ballet or opera. (Let me recommend Mr. Daintrey to the directors of Sadler's Wells.) But the smaller pictures, such as *Spithead* and *Foligno*, have uncommon charm.

Roger Marvell

GRIMES REVISITED

Last week's revival of *Peter Grimes* at Sadler's Wells was marked by scenes of extraordinary enthusiasm, and it begins to look as though the success of this brilliant operatic firstling were now assured—at any rate, in the country of its origin; nor need we wait very long for the verdict of the world, next month's Stockholm production being only the first of many, both in Europe and America.

There was only one important change in the Sadler's Wells cast, and that was not an improvement. Miss Catherine Lawson, the new landlady of the Boar, lacked her predecessor's loud voice, rolling eye and Hogarthian aspect: she tried hard to be a publican, but gentility kept breaking in. On the other hand, Miss Valĕtta Iacopi improved on her own previous performance as Mrs. Sedley; this would now be a capital impersonation, if only she would consent to modify an absurdly exaggerated make-up. Several points in the stage management had been clarified, and to its general effectiveness there is now only one serious exception: the climax of the second act, when the apprentice falls over the cliff's edge, quite misses fire. I doubt whether the uninstructed spectator can make out what has happened at this point; not only was the boy's scream inaudible (it ought to freeze the theatre), but Mr. Pears failed to convey the horror of the moment for Grimes. Indeed, well as Mr. Pears sang, I felt rather too frequently the conflict between his own amiable personality and the daemonic character he was attempting to impersonate. Bernard Shaw said of Edouard de Reszke's Mephistopheles that his smile, while obviously intended to express diabolic mockery, "would make the most timid child climb straight up on his knee and demand to be shown how a watch opens when blown on"; and a similar air of benevolence hampers Mr. Pears in his more violent outbursts. If only, one couldn't help thinking, Mr. Laurence Olivier happened to be a tenor, what an elemental Grimes we should witness!

It is perhaps for the same reason that I am beginning to find the unaccompanied "mad scene" in the last act tedious: it demands in the performer a combination of dramatic virtuosity, musicianship, variety of tone-colour and sheer animal magnetism which few operatic tenors are likely to possess. The idea of the scene is excellent; and if the intended effect is perhaps unrealisable, it is almost a solitary error of judgment; otherwise, each rehearing of the score increases our admiration for the composer's workmanship, his sense of the stage, and the boldness and fertility of his musical invention. Last week the choral passages sounded particularly brilliant; and, in general, the Sadler's Wells production does about as well by the work as can be expected from a theatre of its modest size and resources. But while certain individual performances, such as those of Miss Joan Cross and Mr. Roderick Jones, will be difficult to improve upon, we should not deceive ourselves into thinking that what we now hear in Rosebery Avenue is anything like what the composer heard in his imagination. To realise his intentions properly, a large house, a large chorus and a large orchestra are all essential; in particular, the Interludes suffer lamentably from the shortage of strings; and one can only guess enviously how they will sound when performed by the incomparable Boston Orchestra, whose conductor had the wit to commission the work from Mr. Britten.

I should like to draw attention to an interesting series of concerts at cheap prices which are being given on Thursdays, at fortnightly intervals, in the lovely church of St. Bartholomew at Smithfield. The programme on March 14th is especially rewarding, when the choir of St. Matthew's, Northampton, come south to sing works specially written for them by Berkeley, Rubbra and Britten, as well as the *Festival Te Deum*, which Mr. Britten wrote for a Swindon church. Of these four works, all but one are receiving their first London performance.

Desmond Shawe-Taylor

THE MOVIES

"Love Eternal," at the Curzon
"Une Femme Disparait," at the Academy
"The Resurrection of the French Film Industry"
"Presence Aux Ames," M.O.I.
"The Spiral Staircase," at the Odeon
"The Diary of a Chambermaid," at the London Pavilion

Since the larger part of my space, this week and next, will be given up to French films, let me begin with a couple of outsiders. Robert Siodmak's *The Spiral Staircase:* popular favourite, artfully disguised; the maniac who goes about killing women, in this case women with some physical defect. No psychology worth speaking of, but a touching performance by

Miss Dorothy McGuire as the dumb girl; lush background and atmosphere that almost succeed in cloaking the essential triteness of the theme. *The Diary of a Chambermaid*: wild drama of eccentrics among whom the new chambermaid, Miss Paulette Goddard, hopes to pick a rich husband. One of her admirers hops and gobbles roses, another is a thieving sadistic valet, a third coughs his way to success, looking like R. L. Stevenson. True love will smoothe out consumption. The whole thing, served with dark pictorial relish, is supposed to take place in France, "far from Paris," very far. Director, Jules Renoir. Alas!

This brings us to the French films, two of which are already on view. Cocteau's *L'Eternel Retour*, at the newly opened Curzon cinema, is a masterpiece, unique of its kind, that should be enjoyed and pondered by every serious-minded filmgoer. Any little hesitations one may have felt at the first impact disappear after a second or third visit. There can be no doubt that with this film Cocteau enriches the cinema as *Peter Grimes* has enriched opera. I reviewed *L'Eternel Retour* when it was first press-shown a year ago, but I shall make no apology for returning to it in some detail next week. My objection, by the way, to the English title—*Love Eternal*—seems to have been misunderstood. I don't mind the equivalent, but nearly every film (look down the amusements column) gets called *Forever in Love* or *To-morrow is Forever*, or words to that effect.

The other film now running, *Une Femme Disparait*, must be set down as a disappointment. It shows us Madame Françoise Rosay playing in four very different roles (but we knew already she could do that) and such virtuosity, however admirable in itself, spoils any serious chances the film might otherwise have had. I liked best the scenery and the final episode—appetites on the waterfront—in an ill-proportioned, unconvincing, but not unenjoyable film.

Mr. K. S. Ankersmit provided the Royal Photographic Society on Tuesday evening with the best general picture we have yet had of the French film industry under the Occupation. The figures may surprise—220 feature films made during that period, only a handful of which were swallowed up by the Nazi propaganda machine. We were given tantalising extracts from half a dozen films, including *Goupi Mains Rouges* (a savage comedy of peasant life for which my affection grows) and Le Brument's *La Duchesse de Langeais*, with dialogue by Giraudoux and music by Poulenc. The latter has a cool sparkle and is sumptuously furnished. In general, so far as it is possible to form impressions, one scents a new violence and a preference for tough surroundings, with retreats into madness or childhood. I didn't much care for the romantic development in horror (Christien Jacques' *Sortilège*), which seems ill-suited to the French character, but all that we saw was impressive. Mr. Ankersmit made a very good point when he warned us that we might find the action slowed down a little in these films, and went on to say that the tradition of a *langue chantante* had always provided obstacles in the making of talkies. The title, by the way, of Mr. Ankersmit's illustrated lecture suggests that during the Occupation there was a serious decline in French films. This does not seem to have been the case; conditions may have been appalling, but the talent was there, and an audience which boycotted all except French films was waiting.

Lastly the M.O.I. has issued a documentary of France's recovery under the title *Présence aux Armes*. It lacks the excitements of the Resistance film, being largely the picture of armies built up abroad, but within the official limits it is worthy of its theme.

William Whitebait

RADIO NOTES

Interest in the prospects for Programme C runs high among listeners of educated taste, and it seems reasonable to hope that they may soon be vouchsafed some detailed information of the lay-out for the first three months. The Talks, Features, Drama, and Music departments will no doubt have been storing caviare for some time past, and perhaps we may even expect a little sophisticated revue from Variety. The chief argument I have heard advanced against the new programme is that, in taking for granted an élite audience (which cannot, after all, be denied) and by confining the more serious broadcasts to one wavelength, it will deprive the average listener of opportunities to raise the level of his or her brow. Assuming (as some contemporary critics would refuse to do) that this is desirable, it would be interesting to know how many of the habitués of, say, Saturday Night Theatre or the Merry Mandoliers had taken the pledge after accidentally tuning in to the *Hippolytus*, a Beethoven quartet, or one of Patric Dickinson's programmes of verse. "Enough to make it worth while to go on slogging away": so runs—or used to run—the cardinal slogan of Broadcasting House. "Very few indeed," whispers the voice of Experience. For I think the fact must be faced that a great many people to-day are actively hostile to works of art and do not want to be put in the way of enjoying them. This is one of the characteristic blights which have fallen upon our civilisation, and its ravages are daily increased by sinister persons who, under the cloak of "bringing Art to the People," are doing their best to destroy it altogether. If Programme C is to fulfil its true function, which is to preach to the converted (never the work of supererogation it is proverbially supposed to be), it must avoid the unctuous smirk of Compromise that disfigures the eager face of British Broadcasting. And let us, please, have a constant leaven of revivals—especially of programmes like MacNeice's *The Dark Tower* and those of World Theatre, which had a minority success in Programme A, some of the less elementary Forces Educational broadcasts from the Light Programme, and many of the excellent features which now escape notice because they are part of the Schools or Children's Hour schedules. Such a practice, of past programmes, would arouse less prejudice than the method of "starring" recently adopted by the B.B.C., and it would also, I cannot help thinking, prove an attractive bridge between different kinds of listener. Where Talks are concerned, it would be valuable to have a small but certain number of broadcasts devoted to points of scholarship and expertise, special and esoteric subjects—the equivalent, in fact, of the articles to be found in the *Burlington Magazine*, *Country Life*, or *Music and Letters*.

To broadcast a programme which has been previously recorded should—unless music is involved—be quite unobjectionable; but the case is altered if the surface of the record is audible and the voice level changes constantly. In Mr. Priestley's talk last Sunday, "The Secret Dream," the surface noise was not more than perceptible; but the voice level changed startlingly, four or five times. His matter was, as on the previous occasion, full of important truths, and it was well calculated to soothe the bitterness and exasperation which periodically threaten Anglo-American friendship. But the necessity to pack all he wished to say into fifteen minutes resulted in so hurried and monotonous a tempo that it was no easy matter to sustain one's attention. Had Mr. Priestley been "on the air" at the time he delivered the talk, might he not have come nearer to his usual mastery of radio technique?

Recommendations.—*February 17th*. French Music (8.50 a.m.); Music Lovers' Diary (11 a.m.); New Records (D. Shawe-Taylor, 11.20 a.m.); J. B. Priestley (Russia—and Fraternity, 9.15 p.m.); Trio (11.3 p.m.).

February 18th. A Journey to the Centre of the Earth (Jules Verne, L.P. 12.45 p.m.); African Travel (V. S. Pritchett, 6.20 p.m.); B.B.C. Midland Orchestra (Dino Borgioli, Midland, 9 p.m.).

February 19th. Recital (Irene Scharrer, 10.15 p.m.).

February 20th. Verdi Requiem (7 p.m.); A Journey through Spain (Laurie Lee, 8.45 p.m.).

February 21st. Record Review (Christopher Stone and W. H. Montague-Pollock, L.P., 6.30 p.m.); Concert (7.15 p.m.).

February 22nd. Forces Educational Broadcast ("Moby Dick," L.P., 10 a.m.). An Englishman Looks at Yugoslavia (9.30 p.m.); "Charles Tennyson Turner" (William Plomer), 11.30 p.m.).

February 23rd. Beethoven Quartet (11.3 p.m.).

Edward Sackville West

POSTAGE on this issue is: Inland, 1½d.; Foreign, 1d.; Canada, 1d.

Correspondence

A.M.G. AND TRIESTE

Sir,—In view of the despatch of an Allied Commission to investigate Trieste and Venezia Giulia, so as to recommend terms of settlement, it is time public opinion realised the part being played by Allied Military Government in that part of the world.

Important evidence on this subject appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* of December 21st. It corroborates many of the findings of the group of M.P.s that visited Trieste in November. Let me summarise the main points:

(1) The M.G. correspondent says that Lt. Simoni, the American A.M.G. education officer, refused to accept a Slovene school text-book sent him from Yugoslavia.

When in Trieste some of our group of M.P.s visited the headquarters of the Italo-Yugoslav Liberation Committee and were shown the Italian school primer that had been accepted and the Slovene primer rejected by A.M.G.

I read both (I speak some Italian and can just understand school-primer Slovene). There was not a penny to choose between them. Both were full of nationalist propaganda. It was definitely unfair to accept one and reject the other.

(2) The M.G. correspondent says that the Slovene, Dr. Srecko Baraga, "acts as interpreter to the American A.M.G. education officer Simoni." We were informed in Trieste that Dr. Baraga is actually in charge, under Lt. Simoni, of the Slovene education department of A.M.G.

Now, the overwhelming majority of the parents of the Slovene children for whose education A.M.G. have made Dr. Baraga responsible, are Republicans and staunch supporters of the new Yugoslavia. Many of them fought as partisans.

Who is Dr. Baraga? The M.G. correspondent confirms what we M.P.'s learned on the spot, namely, that Dr. Baraga was a member of the *Domobranci*, who were "a kind of special constabulary, under the German and Fascist occupation, with civilian members. They were Catholic, Royalist and certainly anti-Tito." Dr. Baraga is being tried *in absentia* at Ljubljana as a war criminal.

On our way from Ljubljana to Trieste some of us M.P.s were shown the village where Dr. Baraga was alleged to have tortured partisan sympathisers.

Is it surprising that Slovene parents feel about A.M.G. putting this man in charge of the education of their children?

(3) The M.G. correspondent reports that 11 out of the 21 Slovene teachers appointed by A.M.G. are also former *Domobranci*. That suggests that the Slovene newspaper, *Primorski Dnevnik*, was not far wrong when it stated on November 24th that "the whole superior administration of the Slovene Allied schools chosen by Mr. Simoni is Nazi, Fascist and *Domobranci*."

And yet A.M.G. have closed this paper down for making that statement and refusing to retract it.

I would add that the information we got at A.M.G. headquarters, and from the 13th Army Corps, confirmed what we were told by delegations of Italian workers: The majority of the Italian workers in Trieste are at one with their Slovene comrades in wishing to accept Tito's offer to come into the Yugoslav Federation as a self-governing unit, for social, economic and political reasons that they explained convincingly. Togliatti, addressing the Italian Communist Congress, has recently confirmed (and deplored) this state of mind among the Italian workers in Trieste. I formed the opinion while in Trieste, and so I believe did most of my fellow M.P.'s, that A.M.G. loads the dice against the Italian Reds and their Slovene allies. It does so partly on social grounds—to put it very mildly, the British and American officers who run A.M.G. lack sympathy and understanding for "Reds" and do not like the symptoms of social revolution. And it does so on the international ground that the people of Trieste must be encouraged to oppose a *rapprochement* with Yugoslavia because, as a British General in Cairo put it, "we don't want a Soviet port on the Adriatic."

K. Zilliacus

House of Commons.

"APPROACH TO PAINTING"

Sir,—In reviewing my book *The Approach to Painting*, Mr. Raymond Mortimer enquires:

"Among whom, then, has Mr. Bodkin discovered this widespread delusion that a great and beneficent cleavage, a complete rupture, with outworn tradition occurred about the time of Cézanne's death and as a result of his example." He is quite certain that neither Roger Fry nor Mr. Clive Bell could be cited in support of "a wild remark." Yet Roger Fry, in his preface to the catalogue of the Second Post-Impressionist exhibition, which was held in 1912, declares: "however various the directions in which different groups are exploring the newly found regions of expressive form, they all alike derive, in some measure from the great originator of the whole idea, Cézanne." Mr. Clive Bell in *Art*, published in 1914, declares that "with the maturity of Cézanne a new movement came to birth . . . In so far as one man can be said to inspire a whole age, Cézanne inspires the contemporary movement." In *Since Cézanne*, published in 1922, Mr. Bell continues to hold firmly to his opinion about "the contemporary movement—that movement in every turn and twist of which the influence of Cézanne is traceable."

Mr. Mortimer makes a more serious charge against me when he accuses me of "calumniating the dead" by accepting "lightheartedly" an "improbable and easily disproved" story about Roger Fry's first conception of the Post-Impressionist exhibition of 1910 and his first reactions to some of the extreme paintings that were shown there. I was an eager visitor to the exhibition and still possess my annotated catalogue of it, in which Fry claims no credit for his recognition of the coming men, beyond that involved in the bare mention of his name as one of the seven persons who constituted his executive committee. I know the friend to whom he spoke on his journey back from France with the first pictures by Picasso and Matisse to be shown in London, and have heard him tell the story which I believe to be true. It certainly cannot be disproved. If Mr. Mortimer could quote a single eulogy about either Picasso or Matisse from Fry's copious criticisms prior to November 1910, he might have better reason to doubt it. Moreover, I do not think that my words justify him in suggesting that I accuse Fry of embarking on his momentous venture with a corrupt motive of personal gain: for, like everyone else who was privileged to know him, I believe his financial integrity always to have been unimpeachable.

Finally, I would like to make a mild complaint against Mr. Mortimer's misquotation of my description of Tintoretto's *Marriage Feast at Cana*. I did not say it was "a simple village gathering." I said it was "a simple country gathering," at which there were only twenty guests. Thomas Bodkin

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts,
The University, Birmingham 15.

[Mr. Mortimer writes: I sincerely apologise to Mr. Bodkin for my carelessness in calling his 'simple country gathering' a 'simple village gathering.' On the other points I see no reason to withdraw.

1. In his book Mr. Bodkin complained of a delusion widespread among admirers of modern painting. In my review I maintained that no one of any authority—and certainly neither Roger Fry nor Mr. Clive Bell—entertained this delusion. In his letter Mr. Bodkin ripostes: "But Fry and Mr. Bell both say that Cézanne inspired the contemporary movement!" Would not Mr. Bodkin agree with this plain statement of fact? Where in the remarks he quotes is any "delusion"? To say that an artist is a great originator who inspired a whole age is not the same as saying he made a complete rupture with tradition. In every century there have been new movements that have served to keep alive the tradition of European painting.

2. Touching Roger Fry, I am compelled to quote again the greater part of Mr. Bodkin's statement.

> Roger Fry became interested in the fortunes of the Grafton Galleries then drifting towards insolvency. Endeavouring to retrieve that situation, he determined to organise an exhibition. . . . He had, apparently, no exalted notions about the artistic merits of the projected show.

I maintain that this implies (*a*) that Fry was involved financially in the Grafton Galleries; and that for this reason (*b*) he organised there an exhibition of pictures about the merits of which he was sceptical. The first of these implications is now disavowed by Mr. Bodkin. I suggest that it was not I who misrepresented the views expressed in the book; it is the book that misrepresents what are now revealed as Mr. Bodkin's real views. The second of these implications he reasserts, on the hearsay evidence of an unnamed witness. I still prefer to believe the account given by Virginia Woolf in her biography.—Ed. *N.S. & N.*]

STEPNEY

Sir,—While Stepney is not yet a Garden City, I was rather startled by some of the lurid descriptions of Mr. Ritchie Calder—"Stepney, that sump of humanity—people, 200,000 of them at the outbreak of war, persisted there not from local patriotism, but from necessity—the community spirit which first glimmered like a marsh gas above the morass of human misery"—this last being a reference presumably to the "purifying" effect of the blitz. And then there are the allusions to local worthies picturesquely described as "Mickey the Midget" and "Father John." Taken as a whole, the effect of Mr. Calder's article is to leave your readers with the impression that on the east, Aldgate pump marks the outpost of civilisation and that beyond is darkest England.

So much for descriptive reporting. Now for the facts:

Stepney, like all dockside areas has, of course, its seamy side, but this is something quite apart from the main stream of its social life. I feel, however, I am not exaggerating when I assert that the chief characteristic of Stepney's social life is an almost puritanical respectability, buttressed by as many conventions and taboos as are to be found in any middle-class suburb. For example, the Borough Council prohibits professional boxing in its public halls, nor are hirers allowed to sell alcoholic liquors at dances, etc.

This puritanism sometimes embarrassingly invades even our literary life and I well remember taking part in a battle royal upon the Libraries' Committee to prevent one of George Moore's books from being thrown out of our public libraries. Mr. Calder states that Stepney was never a homogeneous community, but may I say that for a long time now, Jew and Gentile have found a common ground and meeting place in a virile Labour Movement founded over thirty years ago by Clement Attlee and a handful of I.L.P. pioneers.

Between the wars, the public representatives of the Stepney Labour Party, inspired by such men as George Lansbury and John Scurr of the neighbouring borough of Poplar, first humanised the old Poor Law and made life bearable for the unemployed, and secondly, tackled with vigour the work of slum clearance. To-day. after nearly six years of war and destruction, during which much of our good work was undone, we are taking heart again and under a Labour Government are preparing to play our part in the L.C.C.'s great scheme for rebuilding the East End. I think this disposes of the strangest of Mr. Calder's assertions "that politics between elections were for the few and left very much to the caucus."

If space permitted I could mention many other things, such as the member's meetings of the Limehouse Labour Party to which its M.P. (The Prime Minister) reports periodically and is questioned just like the writer and the other Limehouse public representatives. Then we have that home of light and learning, Toynbee Hall, and last, but by no means least, the People's Palace. J. C. Lawder

Leader, Stepney Borough Council.

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JONATHAN CAPE

STEPNEY

Sir,—I should like to express my entire agreement with two of the correspondents whose letters appear in your issue for Feb. 9th. I have been in active medical practice in Stepney since the first decade of this century, although, being in my seventy-fifth year, with a dicky heart, I am not able to be so active as I was. The clinic of myself and my partners was destroyed, with most of the rest of Harford Street, by "enemy action" in the spring of 1941. There are few of the habits and tastes of the people of this most interesting part of London of which I have not intimate and sympathetic knowledge. Every statement made by Miss Rose Tandy is true. Journalists, with little previous experience of the borough (with its scandalous overcrowding and commercial exploitation by non-resident richer persons) inhabited by typical English men and women of the finest type, now rush in and write up the place, the people and their pre-war customs.

Mr. Saklatvala, though not a Stepney inhabitant, has, in my opinion, correctly stated the medical position of doctors such as myself.

St. Thomas' Vicarage, **Harry Roberts**
East Arbour Street, Stepney, E.1.

THE KURDS

Sir,—In your issue of January 26th last I was most pleased to see an article by your correspondent on Kurdistan. The question of the Kurds has been heavy on my "Allied" conscience ever since I came in contact with the Kurds in 1942, and I have hoped that someone with more authority than myself might raise this very important issue. Now I would be glad of the opportunity to add to what was, after all, a tentative beginning by your correspondent.

Unfortunately, my contact with the Kurds was confined to living ten months on the Syrian fringes of Kurdistan where the tribes are almost exclusively *émigrés* from Turkey. I did have considerable dealings with members of the embryo movement for Kurdish independence in Syria, and I do know something of their aims and of what they, the *émigrés*, have escaped by their exile. First, though the Kurds live in the mountains stretching from the Caucasus almost to Basra and quite to Alexandretta, the proposed independent State is a pear-shaped one, stalk end at Alexandretta and base abutting Lake Van; i.e., territory which is at present almost entirely Turkish. This State, they claim, would be economically sound and feasible—given the peace of UNO.

But the difficulties facing the formation of such a State are formidable and would require much initial assistance from friendly Powers, not the least difficulty being Turkish opinion. Turkish opposition to Kurdish nationalism goes as far as a deliberate attempt at the gradual extermination of the race. I believe I am correct in saying, though I can claim no absolute proof at first hand, that Kurdish males are drafted wholesale into the notorious Turkish Labour Corps, always to stations distant from their homes so that the propagation of the race is interrupted. In ways only fully understood by the sufferers in the Labour Corps, few are permitted ever to return home. Minority populations whose service to their country is confined to payment of crushing taxes and the slavery of the Labour Corps are not allowed to bear arms either in the form of military service or privately at home. To the sheltered Briton the state of banditry, tribal warfare and official corruption in the hinterland of Asia Minor is inconceivable. The village without defensive arms is immediately abandoned for more fortunate ones, and wisely so.

The Turks forbid the use of the Kurdish language—an attitude which is now generally accepted as an impermissible offence against a minority.

I prefer not to add to the present flood tide of horror and atrocity stories by a recital of individual cases known to me; its effect would anyway be lost in the glut. But I would ask your readers to remember past Turkish ferocity, now practised in a less public manner in a less publicised region.

The young UNO has so much on its hands that one hesitates to press at the moment for its further services, but should it not consider setting up a committee to protect, at least, the interests of nations which cannot as yet claim representation as sovereign States? The Atlantic Charter gave such peoples as the Kurds a right to claim the interest of the Great Powers, however little Messrs. Churchill and Roosevelt may have been thinking of them at the time. The hope that fine declaration gave the Kurds was depressing to me at the outset because the essentially immoral policy of expediency and the vast deserts of cynicism weighed so heavily against them. Perhaps now, when UNO is so enthusiastic about its task, would be the moment to bring to its notice the case of the Kurds and their like. **Tigris**

BUREAUCRATIC IRRELEVANCE

Sir,—While I deplore with Maurice Cranston (your issue Feb. 2nd, p. 86) that anyone should have to go to the trouble of getting my book *Married Love* and H. Ellis' *Psychology of Sex* from the "special" shelves in the British Museum, I cannot tamely permit to pass his use of the word "pornography" in this connection. I did not know he was writing or I would have verified, what I think must be the fact, that the B.M. authorities make these books "special" because they are precious and, at present, irreplaceable. *Married Love* has been out of print for months and will be out of print for months to come: one library I know of even before the paper shortage had 40 copies stolen one after the other! It is not to be forgotten also that a certain religious sect makes it a virtuous act on the part of its followers to mutilate or destroy the truth, especially when published under my name, and libraries have consequently suffered.

Norbury Park, Dorking. **Marie C. Stopes**

PAPERS FOR UNRRA STAFF

Sir,—In your issue of November 15th you published my appeal for used copies of the New Statesman and Nation to be sent to UNRRA teams working in the field and to English-speaking Displaced Persons.

The response has been enormous. Over 7,000 packets and 1,800 letters have already arrived, and have been distributed throughout the American zone. I have done my best to reply to all those who enclosed an address, but I hope I may again have the courtesy of your columns to express my thanks to all who so generously responded to the appeal.

UNRRA 4050, **Chas. F. Morgan**
A.P.O. 757,
U.S. Army Overseas.

SIR JOHN TENNIEL

Sir,—I am preparing an illustrated monograph on the life and work of Sir John Tenniel. I should be grateful for news of unpublished letters and drawings, anecdotes or personal reminiscences.

14 Lymington Gardens, **Frances Sarzano**
Stoneleigh, Surrey

CZECH CHILDREN

Sir,—Last week you published a letter appealing for hospitality for Austrian children in this country. Might I add a plea for Czechoslovak children. I am afraid I know of no organisation, "Friends of Czechoslovakia", in Britain. I must, therefore, write as a private individual recently returned from that country, and ask people to make representations to their Members of Parliament on behalf of the children of a country which has always been our friend. The Czechoslovak children are not suffering from "the present lack of adequate food and clothing" but from seven years of it. The statistics on tuberculosis are not yet complete but a preliminary survey shows that the percentage of tuberculosis amongst schoolchildren is probably as high as 30 per cent. Surely if we are offering help to the children of any European country, those in Czechoslovakia should be given highest priority. **Belinda Davies**

8, Elsworthy Terrace, N.W.3.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

"O GOD, give me the Duke of Hamilton! I *will* love him and make him happy." The girl who so confidently appeals to Divine providence in the pages of her diary is a blonde Russian of pale complexion and grey eyes, though a trifle plump for her age which is twelve. The Duke sits on the balcony of Gioia, the Italian courtesan, munching chocolates and outraging Nice society of the Seventies—a foppish young man with a red moustache and tending towards embonpoint. To the child he is Apollo Belvedere, with "the same manner of supporting his head, a nose like his." And God is good; He will give him to her; He has always heard her prayers, first when she wanted the game of croquet, then when in tears she asked Him to help her to learn English and He sent her a vision of the Virgin to reassure her. There is, so far, no reason to doubt His omnipotence. But before He has occasion to grant her latest wish, the Duke, unaware even of her existence, has rid himself of his beautiful mistress and married a noblewoman. This, cries the child in utter despair, is the greatest misfortune which can befall a woman. "Ah, now I see that one cannot do as one likes."

From time to time, not more often perhaps than two or three times in a century, a book appears which impresses itself on the minds of the young as though it were a stroke of fate, a personal experience leading to a new turning in life or rather an inclination towards death. The publication of *The Sorrows of Werther*, of Artzibashev's *Sanin*, of Weininger's *Sex and Character*, was in each case followed by a wave of suicides among adolescents. Depicting, or theorising on, the imperfection of life and the limits set to human aspiration, they made conscious in every youthful reader his melancholy presentiment, his weltschmerz. Scarcely less a degree of passionate response has been aroused by Marie Bashkirtseff's journal. To read her at seventeen is fatal. Not even her repetitions, the tedium and prolixity of her love talk, her narcissism and incessant self-analysis will break the spell—but then, who are less easily bored than the young or better able to wade through maundering passages in a haze of dream and half-awareness! It is more surprising that her uninhibited account of her life between the ages of twelve and twenty-four, despite its questionable literary value, was yet acclaimed by such widely different men as Gladstone and Maurice Barrès. Her fascination, no doubt, lies in her sincerity, not in her genius, for although circumstances made it possible for her to develop all her talents, she had none sufficient to make her great; and it may be argued that the moods of insane vanity, despair and wild ambition which assailed her so early in life, would be found to exist in more than one adolescent, if only he knew how to set them down on paper. Yet in her resolution to take note of all her "thoughts and hopes, deceptions and villainies, beauties, sorrows and joys," and to do so with the utmost candour, lay potential greatness. No sooner had she undertaken the task than she was pained by the impossibility of describing sentiment, of communicating the uncommunicable. She was not yet fourteen when she compared the attempt to translate sensations into words to a nightmare in which one has no strength to cry out. "Never will anything written convey the least idea of real life. . . . I wish I could make the others feel like myself!" And yet, reading her journal one does see the inner mechanism at work, and watches an interplay of emotions as one watches the movement of a skeleton clock. Through a fortunate combination of great intelligence, an unusually catholic education, and all the liberty which wealth and a devoted *entourage* could provide, she had become the first articulate witness of an age which habitually is as mute as it is stuffed with violent and conflicting feeling.

Marie Bashkirtseff was born in 1860. She came from two noble families, the Babanines who were of Tartar descent but gentle temper—the atavism occurred in herself—and the Bashkirtseffs, capricious, dissipated, and with a tendency to consumption. Her parents having quarrelled early in their marriage, she had no home in Russia, but travelled about Europe accompanied by a mob of female relations, doctors, teachers, servants, and a negro boy, tyrannically ruling over her train while she was being brought up like a little princess of Valois. She spoke five languages besides Latin and Greek; among her favourite authors were Plutarch, Herodotus, St. Augustine; and she was able to play on five instruments, most probably not very well. If any woman ever had "a room of her own," it was Marie. Hers had a lace-covered bed and a ceiling draped with blue satin. She also possessed, in Nice, a drawing-room, a laboratory, a school-room. It was a hot-house, built to breed genius. A glorious future seemed assured, and when she began her diary she looked forward to it with impatience. At fourteen she professed herself tired of her obscurity, "Je dessèche d'inaction, je moisis dans les ténèbres. Le soleil, le soleil, le soleil." Exactly how fame would come to her she did not know, only that it would, that it must. A year later, inspired by the grandeur of Roman monuments, she exclaimed: "I want to be Cæsar, Augustus, Marc Aurelius, Nero, Caracalla, the Devil, the Pope." In saner moments it seemed certain that she would marry a prince or become a singer. Whatever life held, God was merciful, "il ne laissera pas ma belle âme se déchirer. . . . Il me donnera plus que le nécessaire."

So, between singing lessons and the Italian carnival, between clothes and classics and clairvoyants, always entreating God to make her great, she glides from childhood into girlhood, finding it easy even to acquire beauty. The Duke is forgotten—somewhere in oblivion he grows side-whiskers and gets stout. Her first suitor appears, a Roman youth, nephew of Cardinal Antonelli, whose infatuation would seem to need the blessing of the entire papal hierarchy. When he is ill his mother makes him swallow paper strips with the Virgin's name and drink holy water instead of medicine. No wonder the engagement to a member of the Orthodox Church is not being encouraged, and the Cardinalino is whisked away to a monastery. But she is still young, still filled with a veritable fever for life, although what she wants is not what Giono calls "manger la soupe de vie en plein, les pommes de terre, les choux, les carottes, tout ça entier." She still demands, to use his words again, "de la confiture de framboise," only the sweetness, the daily jam rather than the bread.

But then, imperceptibly, everything seems to grow a little flaccid. Sixteen and not yet famous! A terrible doubt assails her: is it conceivable that her imagination, her books and her poets have not told the truth? Did they have the audacity to invent what does not exist, in order to cover up the "saleté naturelle"? The mood does not last. She is off on a visit to her father. Through the next pages of her journal seeps the well-known, the immeasurable ennui of Russian country life. Three somewhat supine suitors, none of them likely to marry her; an occasional wolf hunt; for the rest petty family intrigues. It is with relief that she leaves for Paris to resume her studies. But a catarrh develops into chronic laryngitis, her singing is interrupted, the family moves to Naples again. Another broken-off love affair, this time with a Comte de Larderel who had wished to marry her money. At seventeen the prospect of failure looms ahead. For the first time she cries out in bitter earnest: "I have not justified a single one of my hopes."

For one whole summer she torments herself, "un chat dans le cœur," her narcissism turning into self-contempt. Wearied by her inner struggle, she decides at last to take up painting. Entirely dressed in white, "une blancheur" beside the tall dark figures of her mother and aunt, she makes her dramatic appearance on Montparnasse, at the Julian Studio.

And now begins her last great venture, a race for triumph and against time. From early morning she sketches and paints in the studio, only to return each evening for another course. The smallest encouragement throws her into delirious expectations. Each setback plunges her into despair. Already her journal is filled, not so much with reflections on the technique of art, but with her jealousy of other pupils and her chances of being accepted by the Salon. This time she will arrive, she must. But while her hopes are rising high, her secret fear of defeat manifests itself in her failing health. At eighteen her voice is lost. At twenty she is growing deaf. And steadily the disease in her throat spreads to her chest, furthered, no doubt, by her hereditary tendency to consumption.

One cannot at this point fail to observe that Marie was at all times attracted, almost hypnotised, by the prospect of an early death. At twelve, in Nice, it had first occurred to her as an alternative to fame. Through the years that followed she never lost sight of it, but frequently used it as a threat and a warning to God, an always possible escape from humiliation. "Vaut mieux mourir!" In time the thought became a habit. Science has confirmed what poets had always assumed—that physical illness can be self-inflicted. Her family, it is true, was "poitrinaire." Moreover, she lived feverishly. Like Nietzsche she resembled the flame, "insatiable, burning and consuming itself." And while she burnt herself out, she lacked the stuff to feed the fire of her ambition. "A lot of talent would have saved me." Yet, torn by doubts, she still pursues her end, although she finds it ever harder to believe in it. Her days are spent in feverish pursuit of art, her nights in splendid company, at the balls of the Rue Wagram, the receptions of the Faubourg. She even tries to fasten herself to men of genius, perhaps to explore the mystery of how to be great. But her letters to Zola, Dumas, Edmond de Goncourt remain unanswered. Only Bastien-Lepage consents to be her friend. Mistaking him for a master, she tries to follow in his steps, even casts off her disgust of the common people so marked in her youth, and begins to paint the sordid, the grim and hopeless, life in the raw, the "soupe de vie en plein." But it is of no avail. Whatever she achieves—she succeeds in becoming an estimable painter, and is several times accepted by the Salon—it will not satisfy her boundless aspirations. At last she reaches the antithesis: "Dieu est méchant. . . . Ne pouvant me donner ce qui me rendrait la vie possible, il s'en tire en me tuant."

And so, instead of a triumphal flight of genius, we watch, through the pages of her journal, a much more common and yet more rarely recorded development: the slow frustration, the gradual and painful death of a heart. Death was her refuge; she chose it as deliberately as if she had flung herself into the Seine. At twenty-four she died. Her funeral was ostentatious, as was her burial place which she herself had planned. And yet it was not notoriety but real fame that came to her when, three years later, her journal was published. Anatole France, Barbey d'Aurévilly, Coppée began to praise the "granddaughter of Rousseau." An English translation appeared in 1890; to-day it seems dated where the original is still vivid and fresh. And soon a whole Bashkirtseff literature came into being, from the biographies by Borel and Cahuet to the recently reissued one by Dormer Creston. This success even recovered her pictures from merited oblivion. At last a cult formed, celebrating the memory of this "âme ardente et lumineuse" who had revolted against the millstone of life, refused to be ground to dust and, like the ancients, preferred death to an inglorious existence. In her brilliant beginnings the young began to recognise themselves, while her road of mortification seemed to confirm their darkest forebodings. And yet, as Régnier said of her, "sa façon de vivre, c'est de se survivre." In spite of all, she had earned her immortality. The devout may yet see in this the vindication of her much-abused God.

HILDE SPIEL

THE REBEL

Critical Essays. By George Orwell. *Secker and Warburg.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

The essays in this provoking collection are brilliant examples of political anthropology applied to literature by a non-comforming mind. This approach has done much in the last decade to reconnect literature with life and, with all its obvious limitations, is playing an important part in preserving the continuity of our culture during the present crisis. But social criticism has its destructive or repressive side. To say, for example, that Mr. Orwell's mind appears to be fixed in the boyish satisfactions and rebellions of 1910, tells us nothing about his quality. We all have to be fixed somewhere. Social criticism has never been able to tell us how well a book has been done; it has repressed, when it has not totally lacked, the aesthetic sense. It would be a fair general criticism of Mr. George Orwell, for example, to say that he has used considerable art in concealing this sense from the gaze of the reader as if, in a political age, it were something shameful.

Like Kipling, Mr. Orwell fears to lose the common touch. But he has discovered that the pages of *The Magnet* and *The Gem*, the fantasies of Miss Blandish and the innocent snobberies of Mr. Wodehouse can be just as fruitful to the anthropological critic, as the poems of Yeats, the novels of Dickens or the high journalism of Mr. Koestler. Indeed, more fruitful; no nonsense about merit arises to complicate the candid picture of the public mind. The writer to-day lives in a ramshackle civilisation rather like the old American frontier; in his shack, he pins up his memories, but outside drone the new camp-fire folklore of the Amalgamated Press and the pistol-packing, woman-beating idylls of the new Yank mags. and action stories. The virtue, indeed the originality of Mr. Orwell is, that he puts his head out of the shack door and listens. It is idle to talk about popular culture until you have looked at the popular culture that is under your nose.

With three exceptions — Yeats, Dali and Koestler—the subjects of these essays are all immensely popular writers. The anomalous Dickens leads them; this long essay and the shorter one on Boys' Weeklies have already appeared in book form. Reading the essay on Dickens again, I still think it one of the most sensible and sympathetic ever written; generally, he has a chronic habit of blowing the gaff, but in this subject he sees no scandals and is agreeably level-headed. In his natural anxiety to rescue Dickens from those who think him almost a Marxist, Mr. Orwell has, I think, underrated Dickens's theatrical, demoniac power and his violence. On the other hand it is a good point that Dickens is an irrational and visual novelist who sees crowds, but never really sees a process; and this leads one to the conclusion that social criticism of Dickens has no more to say. The permanence, so far, of the Dickens characters surely lies in the fact that (whatever injustices their creator may be attacking) these are preoccupied with their own inner story. They exist in their own right. Few of them seem to me genuine eccentrics; few of them are genuine political animals. They are all individuals caught in the universal process of soliloquy. Like Dickens they are actors, declaiming their inner fantasies on a stage. They lead double lives. This fantastic quality is what has made them capable of crossing frontiers, and I am shocked to see that Mr. Orwell believes that they do not travel well; or that, at any rate, Tolstoy's characters are more transportable. Theoretically this should be so, and we do probably have the illusion that Tolstoy's characters are very English, and very near to us, just because they are wonderfully transparent; but the answer to Mr. Orwell is the quite extraordinary influence of Dickens on Russian literature, and his great popularity there still. Is it possible that the visual sense of the world, the preoccupation with the inner story or fantasy, is a fundamental human trait, and not a purely bourgeois one—and perhaps one of the reasons human beings try to keep alive, whatever pressure is put upon their lives?

When standards have collapsed, one of the respectable occupations left to the conscientious intelligence is that of placing writers and ideas in their time. For this Mr. Orwell has a very rash but independent taste as one can see from his brilliant handling of poor old P. G. Wodehouse; yet surely he cannot believe that Wodehouse is a victim; he got off lightly after his silly and discreditable broadcasts. Mr. Orwell has an ambiguous feeling for those who fix the fantasies of their time and then outlive it, and especially for that early and often unwitting nursery of sucking-pig Fascism—the minor public school. He sees through it all: but he feels affection for it. After all, Raffles had some sort of code to break; whereas Miss Blandish and company live in the free world of perverted realism. (Again there may be a simple, non-political explanation of Miss Blandish: society has to have its drains.) He is unfair, I think, to Edgar Wallace, because Wallace admired Scotland Yard. Surely, unless one is a criminal, it would be hypocritical not to admire Scotland Yard; it is an expression of precisely that sense of responsibility which Mr. Orwell, once in the Burmese Service, cannot help admiring in Kipling. But old authority is a nostalgia of Mr. Orwell's; it is new authority he cannot bear. But here, of course, one comes against the split in Mr. Orwell. His traditions—one assumes—are those of the Right, and he cannot quite forgive the world for driving him to the Left. He would like the world of the kinder, more decent, more just, the protected virtues; like the anarchists, he would like to believe that man was born good; but he finds that the formative things in society are power, passion and interest. State-birth is like child-birth: a matter of horror and pain, not to be seen by the sensitive. Mr. Orwell cannot forgive the fact that there is always a ruling class; that virtue is not an individual's vision, but the devious, ruthless collective mind of the tribal rulers; and that the tribe which makes our virtues possible, does so by making us responsible for collective crimes. As a rebel, as a John the Baptist who has returned to the wilderness, disappointed in the Messiah, Mr. Orwell rejects with indignation and sincerity these ineluctable facts. He wants virtue without institutions and virtue becomes a waif without them.

There is another Mr. Orwell—the patient amateur, the anti-theoretical observer, the practical critic. Sympathetic to Koestler, he is without Koestler's theatrical self-pity. The kink in Koestler's armour (Mr. Orwell sees in his bleak soldierly way) is his hedonism. Then Mr. Orwell loves the unpopular cause even when it is distasteful, perhaps because it is: the case of Kipling. I do not agree with Mr. Orwell that Kipling was not a Fascist. His sense of law was infected by a superstitious and masonic sense of the secret law of the jungle. But this passage will show Mr. Orwell's power of combative definition:

> Kipling identified himself with the ruling power and not with the opposition. In a gifted writer this seems to us strange and even disgusting, but it did have the advantage of giving Kipling a certain grip on reality. The ruling power is always faced with the question, "In such and such circumstances, what would you *do*?" whereas the opposition is not obliged to take responsibility or make any real decisions. Where it is a permanent and pensioned opposition, as in England, the quality of its thought deteriorates accordingly. Moreover, anyone who starts out with a pessimistic, reactionary view of life tends to be justified by events, for Utopia never arrives and "the gods of the copybook headings," as Kipling himself put it, always return. Kipling sold out to the British governing class, not financially but emotionally. This warped his political judgment, for the British ruling class were not what he imagined, and it led him into abysses of folly and snobbery, but he gained a corresponding advantage from having at least tried to imagine what action and responsibility are like. It is a great thing in his favour that he is not witty, not "daring," has no wish to *épater les bourgeois*. He dealt largely in platitudes, and since we live in a world of platitudes, much of what he said sticks. Even his worst follies seem less shallow and less irritating than the "enlightened" utterances of the same period, such as Wilde's epigrams or the collection of cracker-mottoes at the end of *Man and Superman*.

Mr. Orwell stands apart from the imaginative writers of the Left; he spoils for trouble, dislikes his own side more than the enemy, is closer to continental writers. On the continent he found that drama and the suffering which, with mingled Quixotism and misanthropy, he always sought. It is not only this that sets him apart from the rest of the English intelligentsia. What has made him different is that, like a kind of Kipling turned upside down, he has seen the Empire and knows that the violent English political drama is enacted there and not at home. V. S. Pritchett

HOME TO INDIA

Home to India. By Santha Rama Rau. *Gollancz.* 6*s.*

I doubt whether I can find a fault in this book, beyond a casual reference to myself which lacerates my vanity. Should I perhaps then be disqualified as a reviewer, who (if, so inexperienced myself, I judge him rightly) should be a crafty and erudite fault-picker? But no—if only because, even since I first read *Home to India* in the American edition, some months ago, I knew that it claimed a place on a very special shelf with, and not so far from, the immortal *Passage* to the same place. Mr. Forster survived his title, but I can't quite suppress a wish that the fatal word India did not figure on this familiar yellow cover. The combination of the two may connote bias or boredom or both to many would-be readers, who will thereby deprive themselves not only of much unusual information but also of a first-rate entertainment.

Santha Rama Rau, daughter of an Indian High Commissioner who was trotting about the globe (and also, not at all incidentally, of a mother whose apparently vague beauty and grace, combined with quite unexpected and devastating ability, make her one of the most fascinating of God's creatures), was planted in England, there to receive the whole of her education up to the age of sixteen. At that point, suitably equipped with lipstick, lacrosse, land-of-hope-and-glory, ladylike latitude and lethargic liberalism, she was pitchforked by the war into the midst of a wealthy and strictly orthodox Brahmin family in India. (Or at least, grandmamma, who ruled the roost, was strictly orthodox). Santha, exceptionally gifted with wit, observation and expression, wrote down her experiences. The result is not only something brilliantly done and never, as far as I know, done before, but also, I like to think, a foretaste of what young India may yet give us.

> "There seem to be pigeons in this room," Premila said patiently.
>
> "Their nest is up there in the rafters."
>
> "You always keep pigeons in your rooms?"
>
> "Only here. They will not build on the ground floor."
>
> "Isn't it sometimes a little inconvenient?"
>
> "Not at all." She added pointedly, "They deserve the shelter as much as we do."
>
> "Yes, of course. I suppose they do."
>
> "Besides," my grandmother said, with a distinct twinkle, "you might have been a pigeon in your last birth."

But grandmamma does not always twinkle, by any means. I cannot (being, of course, neo-Fascist by nature) resist quoting her when she finds Santha being Englishly "nice" to the servants:

> They are not your equals, so do not treat them as such. It is not enough for the servants to be frightened of you; that fear must be founded on respect. This pandering to them is some unreasonable sentimentality you have picked up in the West. It embarrasses them as much as it irritates me.

Lipstick and latitude also had to go.

> When John came we had tea in icy solitude on the veranda. His first remark was, "You look pale. Do you feel all right?"

"I feel fine, I'm not allowed to wear make-up around here." I had had a brief argument with mother about that, too.

"Never thought it would make so much difference."

"My grandmother doesn't approve of it."

"Damn right. Now you won't get lipstick all over the cups and napkins."

As mother came out to join us the curtains to the living-room swung behind her, and I saw that the family was gathered there. I don't know how anything immoral could have gone on with the gardeners as an audience, but . . . I was thankful that John was facing out towards the garden.

But, if I have a weakness for quotation of first-water-Thirkell type on so usually dry a subject, let not the reader suppose for a moment that the author fails to deal effectively with India's problems of—for instance—poverty and education. In her easy way she paints these pictures with a dexterity which others, including myself, must horribly envy. The tragedy of India comes to us in the sparkling mirror of a fresh young mind. And one more quotation simply must be made—that of the fiercely Nationalist driver to whom Santha suggested that a nation without machine-guns could hope to achieve little.

He looked at me with scorn. "What we really need is to exploit our unity. If every Indian were to spit once, we could *drown* the British!"

There is, it seems to me, an interesting moral to this exceptional book. Here is an intelligent young mind progressing through British education to India. What is the result? A well-known Indian educationalist tells her:

> My pet (theory) is that a good education should produce teachers, not students. If the British have a really democratic education, it should teach them democracy in something more than an insular sense, and they should spread that to other countries, not hinder it.

And so—

> . . . I . . . thought of going to America . . . Where could you learn about the mechanics of democracy better than in a democracy? . . . I had lived for many years in England, but the English democracy was apt to be distrusted in India. . . . British colleges in India seemed to me hopelessly out of place, and valueless for an Indian who expects to work in an India not governed by the British.

So Santha has gone to America, and I cannot wait for what she has to say about it, and perhaps, later, about Russia. She has special gifts and special opportunities: she can (and *dare* we give just one mark to British education?) walk wisely and wittily among the nations, decorating her observation with a twinkling grace. Through the dull political fog of India this book sheds a warm and welcome gleam.

LIONEL FIELDEN

AIRMEN'S SONGS

Airman's Song Book. Edited by C. H. WARD-JACKSON. Music edited by LEIGHTON LUCAS. *Sylvan Press.* 21s.

No one has thought of combing out the popular songs of our time—a fascinating if horrifying task—and I suppose it will be left to the Players Theatre audience in 2000 A.D. to make a final selection. They should have fun with the crooner once thought approdisiac, the hard-voiced soprano, the nasal appeals of the lover and the traveller from home. Some such process of sifting does, however, go on in various ways, especially during war. Under the stress of events a song like "Tipperary" is picked out from thousands, because it's easy to march to, rousing and regretful in the same breath. Nobody, so far as I know, plugged "Tipperary"; it fitted in, it became part of the times. A melancholy and far better tune "Lilli Marlene," came out of the desert in this war. What matter that it had been chosen by expert propaganda to satisfy the homesickness of the Afrika Korps? It seeped over. Popular tradition, no longer creative, asserts itself by picking and choosing among the mass-produced goods offered to it—in songs, music and films as well as in cigarettes or chair-covers. The impersonally popular is made personal again; so far as there is a new folk-lore to-day, it exists (one might almost say) in private. That is the first thing that will strike a reader of *Airman's Song Book*, an anthology that aims at presenting "an historical picture of the R.A.F. through its own songs."

Look, for example, at the oldest of these songs, dated 1912, but until recently quite unknown to the general public. "The Bold Aviator" will give the atmosphere of astringent parody on which many of the songs were written and sung.

> Oh, the bold aviator was dying,
> And as 'neath the wreck-age he lay, he lay,
> To the sobbing me-chanics about him
> These last parting words he did say:
>   Take the cylinders out of my kidneys,
>   The connecting-rod out of my brain (my brain),
>   From the small of my back get the crankshaft,
>   And assemble the en-gyne again.

This goes to the tune of "The Tarpaulin Jacket": an Auden poem has been made out of a sentimental ballad. Commonest of all motives, the fear of crashing shows itself again and again, though never quite with the inspiration displayed here. "Beyond belief"—runs one chorus—"Beyond belief, Butchered beyond belief"; and the hero of "The Last Lay of the Sopwith Camel Pilot" speaks these dying words to a well-known hymn tune:

> Oh, I'm going to a better land, they binge there every night,
> The cocktails grow on bushes, so everyone stays tight.
> They've torn up all the calendars, they've busted all the clocks,
> And little drops of whisky come trickling through the rocks.

This ditty, despite its Yankee gaiety (it is attributed to an American squadron with the R.F.C.) owes something in its first verse to "The Bold Aviator." The other songs of the time are a queer mixture of recruiting, mock sentiment, ragtime, grouses, and ruthless rhymes. When we arrive at the last war, after passing through the somewhat nondescript interregnum of peace, the atmosphere has changed considerably. The tone is evenly jaunty, a good deal less brutal, more concerned with training, aircrews, and ground-staffs, and altogether closer to the professional song-writer. I like the young Spitfire pilot who, after wrecking his machine the first time up, was passed on from Flight-Commander to Air Vice-Marshal, and at last found himself in the presence of the King:

> His Majesty was smiling when he entered,
>   And offered him a Turkish cigarette,
> And said, "I've had to deal with some strange cases,
>   But this is quite the most perplexing yet.
>
> I'm told you had to prang'er in the hangar,
>   It reminds me of myself when as a boy
> They let me go and fly a brand new Sopwith
>   Which then was quite the latest kind of toy.
>
> But I had to go and prang 'er in the hangar, etc.

There are fighter's songs, bomber's songs, Coastal Command songs, balloon barrage songs (rather endearing), songs from a Nissen hut in Iceland and from the battle of Malta. There is even a song of plastic surgery:

> We are McIndoe's Army—
> We are his Guinea Pigs,
> With dermatomes and pedicles,
> Glass eyes, false teeth and wigs—

in which irony accomplishes such a *tour-de-force* that one almost ceases to take it in. The master-

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piece of this section is parody of an extended kind. It takes the form of a "Service of Thanksgiving for Safe Arrival in Iraq," including hymns, responses, lesson, sermon, and final blessing. "Dearly beloved brethren," begins the Chaplain after the opening hymn, "I humbly pray and beseech you as many as are here present to accompany me with a glorious thirst and some ready cash unto the bar of the Service Institute, saying after me: 'Almighty, and most merciful Records, we have heard and obeyed thy commands like lost sheep . . . have mercy upon us, miserable first offenders . . .'" And after a surrealist address, the service ends:

> *Chaplain:* I will now pronounce the Rigger Mortis. *Salacm Aleekum.*
> *Congregation: Wa aleekum a Salaam.*
> *Together: Whacko*

As parody it is worthy almost of *Ulysses*, but the odd thing is that it was popular on stations throughout the Middle East. "It was dictated," we are told, "to the compiler by rote by a Squadron Leader who had officiated on so many occasions that he knew the whole thing off by heart."

This may seem a far cry from the popular tradition of 1914–18, though to the reader who has gone through the book chronologically, noting a fondness for hymn tunes, it will surprise only by its brilliant elaboration. The tradition revealed by this anthology is jaunty and boastful at one end, relentlessly ironic at the other. It *is* miles away from the whining mock-sentiment of the infantryman, who hitherto has been the chief breeder and carrier of war songs. What sort of ditties attached to the tanks, the engineers, the Commandos, the airborne divisions? We shan't know until somebody provides us with collections similar to Mr. Ward-Jackson's. And the Navy? Goodness knows: theirs is the least bruited tradition of all. Perhaps they are still chanting "Hearts of Oak."

Airman's Song Book has been admirably edited by Messrs. Ward-Jackson and Lucas. The music, so essential a part of the text, is given at length except in the case of very popular tunes, and sometimes even then. The version of "Ring-a-Roses" is not, I think, that generally known.

G. W. STONIER

Opinions. By C. E. M. JOAD. *Westhouse.* 9s. 6d.

For the past three years Dr. Joad has been presented with a certain number of spot questions on such all-inclusive and topical subjects as "The Church and Society To-day," "Standardisation and the Curse of the Machine," and "Education for the Rich—and for the Poor"; on these themes he wrote brief, pithy jottings in excellent argumentative journalistic prose; they were printed week by week in the *Sunday Dispatch* and are here edited and collected. We know and appreciate Dr. Joad's qualities as a quick thinker par excellence, his skill in giving the cogent and pertinent—often also the impertinent—answer to a lightning question, his impenitent sense of the ridiculous and his complete rejection of the bogus and the meretricious, but Dr. Joad, with the aplomb of the individualist accustomed to risking disqualification, is writing very fast on both sides of the paper at once. There is such good in his crusading energy, his impatience with prejudice and sterility of thought, his common-sense and his occasional flights into Taoist imaginative liberty that one could wish he were also more selective. The *Sunday Dispatch* fragments, neat, speedy and felicitous as they often are, remain paragraphs whose main value was that they were born on a Friday afternoon, read on Sunday morning and displaced by a new column the following week.

Week-end Competitions

No. 838

Set by Roger Marvell

Six guineas are offered for a poem of not more than 16 lines inspired by a Greek statue, vase or coin, and written in the style of Landor or Mr. Auden. Entries by February 26. The entries for last week's competition are required by February 19, not as a misprint said, 29.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 835

Set by Roger Marvell

Six guineas are offered for the best quotations upon any of the minor displeasures of life (e.g., putting too much cold water in a bath and then finding the hot tap run cold).

Report by Roger Marvell

Lack of space prevents me printing many good entries and lack of time makes my award of prizes dubious. For only considerable research could absolutely prove what is now only a "moral certainty," viz., that Ronald Lewin's entry is ingenious pastiche. Logic declares that he should have either the first prize or no prize. Being English, I award him a third prize of one guinea. Two guineas go to Allan M. Laing, a guinea and a half to X, half-a-guinea to Archibald Gibbs. (Would X please send his name and address?)

"And twice a day the chaplain called
And left a little tract."

Oscar Wilde, *Ballad of Reading Gaol.*

M. S. MILLIGAN

On receiving in a parcel from abroad, a packet of sugar and a packet of soap-flakes which had both burst in transit to the complete intermingling of their contents:—

"How happy could I be with either
Were t'other dear charmer away."

Gay, *Beggar's Opera.*

ALISON E. FOSTER

On running for the bus I did forget
That all the money on me I should find
Would be a one-pound note. And now I'll get
A piece of "Man's unconquerable mind."

J. M. J. ESTEVEZ

CONTACT.

Nose (Mr. Grove) very much to the fore last week, and R. Browning, whom I liked less than ever. He talks everybody down with his dreadful voice, and always places his person in such disagreeable proximity with yours and puffs and blows and spits in yr. face.

Letters of Mary Gladstone.

DUE FOR COLD SHOULDER.

But I have been troubled with Hamilton, who being present by chance at my receiving both of your first and second packet, out of Madrid, would needs peer over my shoulder when I was reading them, offering to help me to read any hard words, and, in good faith, he is in this business, as in all things else, as variable and uncertain as the moon.

King James I.

SARTORIAL.

. . . if you knew how my wristbands are plaguing me you'd be very sorry. They're too much starched, and *would* come down like mittens; and now I've turned them up, they're just like two horrid china cups upside down inside my coat.

Letter from John Ruskin.

AND HOW!

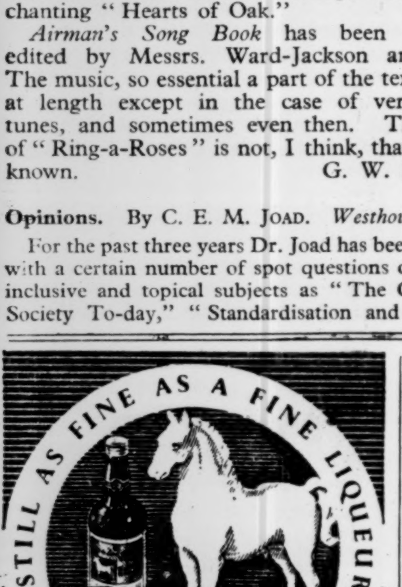
"O, for an axe!" my soul cries out in railway stations, "to hew limb from limb all the friends and Jezebels between me and the ticket-office!"

Logan Pearsall Smith, *Afterthoughts.*

KICKING TIME.

Go to hear an opera of Mozart's: your next neighbour keeps all the while kicking time . . . as if he could not kill it without.

Augustus J. Hare (1827).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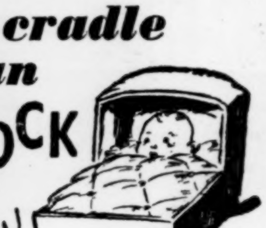

a cradle can* ROCK *but* NOT *your plate

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Company Meeting

F. W. WOOLWORTH & CO.

IMPROVED RESULTS

THE thirty-seventh annual ordinary general meeting of F. W. Woolworth & Co., Limited, will be held in London on 22nd February.

The following is an extract from the statement of the chairman, Mr. W. L. Stephenson, circulated with the report and accounts.

We were able to show a nice improvement in the year 1944. Since that report was circularised we have ceased to be at war and could reasonably expect to make further progress.

The accounts before you now disclose that those expectations were justified. The reasons for this considerable improvement are that there has been a gradually increased flow of better merchandise and also that we have been able to effect certain improvements in our organisation which have resulted in somewhat more efficient merchandising not only with benefit to your company, but also to the benefit of the consumer public. Perhaps I am not quite right in describing this improved supply of merchandise as a flow, because in fact owing to labour and material limitations, the supply of consumer goods is still quite restricted. One important feature is that the quality of manufactured goods coming in during the latter part of the year shows a great improvement on similar wartime items, which were, we all know, of doubtful quality.

The profit of £7,249,447 is the nearest we have yet come to the record figure of 1940, and is better by £1,379,802 than the showing for the previous year, 1944. The Board ha appropriated the considerable sum o £1,000,000 as provision against future taxation. The reserve for this purpose will no stand at £1,750,000.

Deducting the appropriations made by th directors, there is a balance available o £9,965,336. If you accept the recommendations as set out in the report, which includ the customary amounts earmarked for Freehold and Leasehold Buildings Reserve, an for the Staff Benevolent Fund Reserve, an approve the recommendations that a fina dividend of 1s. 9d. per unit be paid a before, with a cash bonus of a further 6d per unit, making with the Interim dividend 2s. 9d. per unit, the balance left to carr forward will be £7,917,836, which is an increase of £522,654 over the 1944 account.

In the balance-sheet there are severa items which have a bearing one on th other. The stocks on hand are roughly th same as at the end of 1944, but inasmuch a the volume of business done in 1945 is considerably greater, it must be taken that th stocks of merchandise on hand are actuall lower in relation to the volume of busines The investments are up by £2,115,313 an the cash at bankers and in hand is higher b £1,596,396. The liability for sundry credito is increased by £1,212,922 and the sum o £6,274,108 is largely provision for the pa ment of taxes including purchase tax, fal ing due at the commencement of this yea The building reserve with the addition transfer now recommended will stand a £2,100,000.

With the expectation of a better supp of superior goods, together with the retu of more of our men from the Services, should be able to face this year with con dence.

WASHING UP.

In New Zealand for a long time I had to do the ashing-up after each meal. I used to do the knives irst, for it might please God to take me before I ame to the forks, and then what a sell it would have een to have done the forks rather than the knives.

Samuel Butler, *Notebooks*.

ALLAN M. LAING

Organists who rise from the bowels of the cinema n the interval:

"Down, thou climbing sorrow!
Thy element's below."

Shakespeare, *King Lear*.

Listening to Frank Sinatra:

"Had he his hurts before?"

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*.

LT. A. M. KITTERMASTER

Opening the wardrobe:

The moth's kiss, first!

Browning, *In a Gondola*.

From *Apes and Angels*, by J. B. Priestley.

"I remember spending one very hot night in a London hotel. The place was full and I was a latecomer, so that I was given a tiny bedroom not far rom the roof and looking out on nothing but a deep narrow court. I got off to sleep very quickly, but woke about two and then vainly tossed and turned. There was nothing for it but to read, and I switched n my light. As a rule, I have a book in my bag, but this night I was completely bookless, and the only eading matter in the room was that supplied by two vening papers. I had already glanced through these apers, but now I had to settle down to read them as I have never read evening papers before or since. Every scrap of print, sports gossip, society chit-chat. City Notes, small advertisements, was steadily evoured. There I was, in my hot little aerie, eading those silly paragraphs about Lord A leaving own, or Miss B, the musical comedy star, making uddings, while the night burned slowly away. For eeks afterwards the sight of an evening paper made e feel depressed."

Trivia, by L. Pearsall Smith.

"'Awful moments? Why, yes, of course,' I said, 'life is full of them—let me think . . .'

"'To find other people's unposted letters in an old pocket; to be seen looking at oneself in a street mirror, or overheard talking of the Ideal to a Duchess; o refuse Nuns who come to the door to ask for subscriptions, or to be lent by a beautiful new acquaintance a book she has written full of mystical slip-slop and dreadful musings in an old-world garden . . .'"

X

MINOR DISPLEASURES.

The discovery, when one has finished one's business in the W.C. that there is no lavatory paper:

"Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliances are relieved,
Or not at all."

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

The notice given, after a week's service, by the maid imported at vast expense from Ireland:

"I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed
Gods and Men, we are all deluded thus."

Shelley, *Hymn of Pan*.

M. E. K.

The telephone bell rings just as one has got into a hot bath.

"O noisy bells be dumb;
I hear you, I will come."

Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*.

E. W. FORDHAM

The Refractory Cigarette Lighter.

". . . Who much enforced shows a hasty spark
And straight is cold again."

Julius Cæsar.

MARGARET M. DORAN

On Tipping (letter from Jane to Cassandra Austen, dated Rowlings, Monday, Sept. 5th, 1796.)

"I am in great distress. I cannot determine whether I will give Richis half-a-guinea or only five shillings when I go away. Counsel me, amiable Miss Austen, and tell me which will be the most."

PACKA

The laundry again has not arrived.

"I have borne, and borne, and borne; and have been fubbed off, and fubbed off, and fubbed off, from this day to that day, that it is a shame to be thought on." Shakespeare. *Henry IV* (2).

The hot-water bottle leaks.

"For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds."

Shakespeare, *Sonnets*.

D. L. CHESTERTON

It is the trifles of life that are its bores after all. Most men can meet ruin calmly, for instance, or laugh when they lie in a ditch with their own knee-joint and their hunter's spine broken over the double post and rails: it is the mud that has choked up your horn, just when you wanted to rally the pack; it's the country member who catches you by the button in the lobby; it's the whip who carries you off to a division just when you've sat down to your turbot; it's the ten seconds by which you miss the train; it's the dust that gets in your eyes as you go down to Epsom; it's the pretty little rose note that went by accident to your house instead of your club, and raised a storm from Madame; it's the dog that always will run wild into the birds; it's the cook who always will season the white soup wrong—it's these that are the bores of life and that try the temper of your philosophy.

Ouida, *Under Two Flags*.

ARCHIBALD GIBBS

On tasting "British" wine.

"How sad and bad and mad it was—
But oh, how it was sweet!"

Robert Browning.

GUY INNES

A Catalogue of Minor Woe selected from *The Miseries of Human Life* (1806), or the Groans of Samuel Sensitive and Timothy Testy.

"The boot continually taking in gravel; while, for a time, you try to calm your feelings by believing it to be only *hard dirt*, and vainly hope that it will presently relieve you by pulverising."

"While walking with others, in a line, through a narrow path, being perpetually addressed by the lady immediately before you, who, although she never turns her head, in speaking, and a roaring wind from behind flies away with every syllable as it is uttered, seems to consider you as provokingly stupid for making her repeat her words twenty times over."

"While you are laughing, or talking wildly to yourself, in walking, suddenly see a person steal close by you, who, you are sure, must have heard it all; then, in an agony of shame, making a wretched attempt to sing, in a voice as like your talk as possible, in hopes of making your hearer think that you have been only singing all the time."

"When you are peaceably reading your paper at a coffee-house—two friends, perfect strangers to you, squatting themselves down at your right and left hands, and talking across you, for an hour, over their private concerns."

"On entering the room, to join an evening party composed of remarkably grave, strict and precise persons, suddenly finding out that you are drunk: and (what is worse) that the company has shared with you in the discovery—though you thought that you were, and fully intended to be, rigidly sober."

"Immediately after expressing to a person your sorrow at having been from home when he lately called upon you—incautiously letting out some circumstance which completely disproves your alibi."

"In reading a new and interesting book being reduced to make a paper-knife of your finger.

"Haggling the nails of your right hand with a pair of blunt scissors held in the left."

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YOUNG man, writer, sks. accom. on farm anywhere for self and wife. Both ex-Service, she needing open-air life, good food nd rest (though not invalid) on doctor's advice. Small income. Willing to work on farm in art/full exchange for board. Box A3405.

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Personal—continued

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